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commonweal

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ROBERT ALAN COOK

APRIL 20, 1989

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NEWS & VIEWS

Uncommon Cause

"Why should any business-and-arms oriented party or politician want to return to the 'bad old days' of political fund raising when they have such 'good new days' ahead of them under the new law?"

Washington Watch, a weekly newsletter, poses the question in zeroing in on the 1974 Campaign Reform Act, which was supposed to take the "dirty money" out of presidential politics, but won't, it is suddenly being widely discovered. (Gene McCarthy said it wouldn't in an article in the Jan. 17, 1975 *Commonweal.*)

According to *Washington Watch*, the 1974 Campaign Reform Act actually "makes it easier, more direct and legal for corporate cash to flow into the campaigns of special-interest-minded candidates"—a detail seemingly confirmed by the recent Federal Election Commission ruling clearing the way for corporations to invest millions in contributions from their stockholders and employees in the political campaigns of "friendlies."

Where fix blame for the travesty?

Washington Watch fingers liberal and reform-minded groups, but particularly Common Cause, which, it says, "takes the major credit throughout its own millions of member-solicitation letters for getting the so-called Campaign Reform Act through Congress."

Common Cause is faulted for not successfully pressing the case for federal matching funds for congressional candidates, and for letting slip by, presumably, the corporation-fund provision, which, among other features, apparently allows employees to pool contributions in the company's name, where it can be managed by political-action committees, its allocation timed and its political effectiveness thus maximized.

Said *Washington Watch*: "With this one 'reform' provision alone in the Common Cause-conceived Federal Election Campaign Act of 1974, erstwhile Republican Cabinet Member, now Common Cause Chairman John Gardner, couldn't have done a more useful job for the Grand Old Party and for Ford, Reagan, Rockefeller, Connally *et al.*—even if he were the Republican National Chairman himself."

The constitutionality of the Campaign Act is now being challenged before the Supreme Court, although a protracted and belated judgment is thought possible, as no fewer than 34 constitutional questions are involved, including freedom of speech and association, right of privacy and due process of law.

Clerical Figures

The Vatican's Central Office of Statistics of the Church recently announced, with satisfaction, that the rate at which priests are leaving or resigning from the active ministry is dropping (down 1.8 percent in 1973 compared with 2.1 percent in 1972), and that 414,000 priests are presently serving 695 million Catholics worldwide.

But there's still the other side of the coin. The Diocese of Tucson, Arizona has revealed that half of the 20 churches in the see city's metropolitan area lack resident priests, and that the diocese must lean more heavily on ordained married deacons.

"There's no doubt about it," said Father Jeremiah McCarthy, vocations director. "If the religious orders were to decide all of a sudden to pull their priests out of Tucson, we'd be hard-pressed to carry on." Tucson has 73 diocesan priests, a 19 percent drop from its 1968 total. There are 82 religious-order priests.

In the Archdiocese of New York, meanwhile, the smallest group of candidates in the history of the archdiocesan seminary (founded in 1898) was ordained last month by Cardinal Cooke: eight. Before 1969, the ordination class had always been 20 or more.

Nor is the picture any brighter in New England. An ad in a diocesan newspaper asks help for the New England Jesuits, one-fourth of whose members are 65-years or older!

Youth Drain

A survey of more than 11,000 boys and girls attending Catholic and secondary schools in the Southwark diocese, a large area of southeast England, reveals that nearly half are lapsing from the Church by the time they are age 15.

The statistic is cited in a report on the "alarming rate" at which those between 14 and 30 are dropping out of the Catholic Church in England and Wales, and rejecting Christianity apparently permanently, and not just as a passing phase.

The report—drawn up by Father John Gaine, secretary to the Bishops' England and Wales Secretariat for Non-Believers—finds that of children baptized as Catholics three in ten do not make their first communion, and four in ten are not confirmed.

It adds that it is becoming "increasingly unlikely" that the children of mixed marriages will be brought up as Catholics, and warns that the Church leadership must get out of its cultural "ivory tower" and meet the people "where they are," if the situation is to be salvaged.

Another observation from the Gaine report: Adolescence is a more important period for religious commitment than is young adulthood, since it is the time when people either become converted or decide to abandon their childhood faith, if they had one.

First Things First

A plaintive request to the media from James Yeager, press secretary to Eugene J. McCarthy:

"Of course, he is still a former Senator, as well as a former Democratic Presidential contender, a former hockey center-ice man, a former first baseman, and a former child. Since his announcement as an independent, he is even a former Democrat.

"So this is a plea that your identifications of McCarthy be put in order, with the most current, 'independent Presidential candidate,' first. The others should follow as appropriate to the story."

Odds and Ends

—The 1976 Nobel Peace Prize sweepstakes are under way. The American Friends Service Committee, a nominator as a Nobel laureate (1947), has proposed the Committee for Cooperation for Peace in Chile, an inter-religious group which the Chilean government has ordered to disband. AFSC said the honoring of the Chilean committee "would lift the hearts' of those suffering from political oppression in Chile and around the world."

—Who holds the brevity-of-record-term as a diocesan editor? Probably Father Edward Byington of Fall River, Mass. He was canned after 13 weeks by Bishop Daniel Cronin for not promising to kill a letter-to-the-editor that "might come" from certain people. "If the bishop wants to direct the news and content of the paper, then he should be the editor," said Byington.

—Finally, a tear drop for Supreme Court nominee John Paul Stevens, who told the Senate Judiciary Committee that he found it "somewhat embarrassing" to acknowledge that his net worth was "as small as it is." How much is that? $171,284.

JOHN DEEDY

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CORRESPONDENCE

Taxing Gifts

Bethesda, Md.

To the Editors: The error in "Taxing Educational Gifts," by William E. Johnston, Jr., [Oct. 10, 1975] is so substantial that it vitiates his conclusion. Mr. Johnston argues that proposed legislation disallowing deductions for the amount of capital gain in gifts of appreciated property and discontinuing or apparently limiting the tax-free status of estates left to charitable institutions will not close tax loopholes for the rich but will tax charitable institutions such as colleges and universities. I have not had occasion to evaluate the second provision but, as to the first, Mr. Johnston is obviously wrong when he writes, ". . . when a donation is made . . . and a tax deduction claimed, the rich person does not get to keep the money or property." The fact is he *does* get to keep the money, or a large part of it. Suppose a donor in the 70% income tax bracket gives away stock now worth $10,000 which he bought years ago for $1,000. He reduces his tax, he gets to keep $7,000. By such means and other loopholes, wealthy men, while admittedly slowly eroding their estates, have avoided paying any income tax at all.

GEORGE B. DUTTON, JR.

Reply

I believe Mr. Dutton commits two mistakes, one of which I tried to warn of in my article. First, stock which has appreciated and is then sold is taxed as capital gain, not as regular income. In the example Mr. Dutton provides, only $4500 would be taxable; at 70 percent the tax on income would be $3150.

But the more important error is the contention that in giving away $10,000 the donor gets to keep $7,000. In fact, none of the $10,000 is kept. The charitable contribution is deducted from gross income to determine the remainder to

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THE CRISIS

Today, at the end of the Holy Year, a year after the closing of the bishops' synod on evangelization, and ten years after the closing of the Second Vatican Council, the word of God is preached no more clearly and effectively than it was a year ago. The preachers, it seems, are talking to themselves. The listeners, supposedly hungry for the word, have turned them off.

The evidence is in the polls and sociological surveys, and before our eyes in the empty confessionals and pews. More and more of the people of God, kicking the dust from their heels, have walked out of the church—at least in so far as they perceive it as an ecclesiastical institution—in disappointment, boredom and disgust, while those ultimately responsible for preaching the word, the bishops, have again become preoccupied in a fruitless political squabble, an ecclesiastical power play in which they will recklessly squander what little moral authority they retain.

It seems to us that there is a real connection between the vitality of the church's liturgical and sacramental life and the quality of the confidence the community has in its official leadership. If the people do not perceive in their leaders a moral vision that corresponds to both the Gospel's radical command to love and their own realistic religious and moral needs, worship will not thrive, for there can be no public testimony to a vision that is not shared. Thus, the two sacraments meant to reconcile us to God and to one another and to strengthen our failing faith—Penance and the Eucharist—have fallen on hard times. The recent "reform" of the sacrament of Penance was a mere cosmetic tinkering with the standard rite, and the would-be penitents, who perceive it as the same old "confession" are still staying away. And the Eucharist liturgy, which should be a free public celebration of shared belief, is still perceived as the Sunday "mass obligation"; and the people—particularly the young—are staying home.

Why? Last fall, a study commissioned by the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions, and prepared by the National Opinion Research Center of the University of Chicago, revealed that weekly mass attendance

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has declined by 21 percent in the last ten years. Less than half of the American Catholics attended mass weekly in 1974. This report is reinforced by another recent NORC survey, "American Catholics—Ten Years Later," directed by Father Andrew Greeley, which shows how the decline in mass attendance has been accompanied by a more liberal attitude toward sexual morality, by a poorer image of the priesthood, and a falling off in respect for church authority and papal infallibility.

American Catholics have turned away from mass, the FDLC-NORC study shows, partly because of complaints about the service itself—poor sermons, but mainly because of deeper feelings about the church. They have not been turned off by liturgical changes; nor have they been overcome by permissiveness or secularism. Rather, they see themselves as alienated by the church's officially uncompromising positions on birth control and divorce, and alienated from the Pope as head of the church.

The hierarchical church, we suggest, has lost its members by refusing to listen to them, by refusing to respect the integrity of their consciences, by failing to see the degree to which the consensus of good and sincere people is itself a guide to the moral law, by refusing to listen to the Spirit when the Spirit is not saying what the curia and the chancery usually like to hear. As Father Greeley wrote, commenting on the data, "But isn't anyone—a bishop, a cardinal, an apostolic delegate, a secretary of state, a pope—*anyone* going to face up to the fact that we have a crisis of gigantic proportions going on in American Catholicism and that something has to be done about it and done about it now?"

It is in this context then that mass attendance, which should be a free expression of both our need for God and of our dependence on the other believers, seems to have become, to many, a ceremonial loyalty oath to an institution that no longer commands wide respect.

Perhaps part of the problem could be alleviated then if we replaced the so-called Sunday mass obligation with a broader understanding of Sabbath observance and of Jesus' command to "pray always"—with a system that respects the freedom of believers to develop prayer styles that bring them together without the authoritarian mortal-sin-if-you-don't arm-twisting that causes such resentment, particularly among the young.

As it is, Sunday mass is often boring. A routine—a long-winded, irrelevant homily tacked onto a canon recited without feeling by a minister apparently oblivious to his congregation. In place of this a variety of religious services—home liturgies, weekday masses, vespers, prayer groups, liturgical dramas, concerts and dances, Scripture readings—could fulfill the general "obligation" and flourish as integral parts of Christian experience.

This will mean that the financial support of the parish will be separated from the Sunday collection, that a greater variety of people will have to assume liturgical leadership, that worship will be less priest-centered, that the liturgy may be taken out of the hands of enthusiasts who indulgently pile hymn upon hymn and prayer upon prayer as the faithful grow restless in their pews, that priests will deal with smaller groups, and that they will not be able to judge the spiritual health of their parishes by counting heads on Sunday. But it may also mean that we are beginning an era in which our devotional practices spring less from external pressures and more from inner needs and convictions.

Meanwhile, the American bishops, rather than recognize the crisis which has grown up over their failure to deal with their people's problems with the liturgy, authority, birth control and divorce, have pulled themselves deeper into the quicksand with their plan for "citizens' lobbies" in every congressional district to work for an anti-abortion constitutional amendment.

We did not approve of the Supreme Court's ruling on abortion; and we support the right of religious groups to lobby for legislation that protects those human values that have a religious dimension. But in staking their prestige on the abortion issue, which is more and more an open question in some Catholic minds, the bishops have shown their indifference to the ecumenical dimension of this issue, raised questions about the violation of church and state laws, and—overestimating their influence with their constituents—have promised a vote they can't deliver. The anti-abortion amendment is a right-wing issue, and the bishops will quickly become tools of conservative so-called "pro-life" (and perhaps anti-busing, anti-"welfare chiselers," pro-arms race, pro-CIA) candidates in the 1976 elections. The effort will fizzle and the church will have been had. With shepherds like this, is it any wonder the flocks have wandered away?

The Christian community will survive vapid liturgies, dull sermons and misguided bishops. The word of God has a power of its own, and each generation will discover it anew and encounter Christ in spite of the obstacles the official church puts in its way. But it will not be the church the Spirit is trying to call into being, one which Karl Rahner has recently described as no longer a flock piously led by wise shepherds, but responsible people who, while respecting the hierarchical powers officials have received in Christ's name, have a voice in deciding the fortune and future of the church.

For Christian belief, when it is mature, is not just a leap of faith nor obedience to authority but the expression of confidence in a whole network of relationships within a community. To foster belief and worship the institutions responsible for the spiritual life of the community, for the preaching of the word and the evangelization of the world, must themselves be believable. And until this distance between preacher and listener is closed, the word of God will not take flesh in the lives of men and women.

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FROM ARGENTINA

THE FIGUREHEAD RULER

Waiting for the coup in Argentina is like waiting for Godot. Evidence is always on the horizon, but the expected event never appears.

Since the death of Juan Peron in July, 1974, rumors have been strong of an imminent military overthrow. The frail government of his wife and political successor, Maria Estella Martinez de Peron, is beset by internal squabblings within the ruling Peronist party, congressional scandal investigations into alleged misuse of public funds by government officials including Mrs. Peron, and widespread political violence which has grown into a civil war between leftist guerrillas and security forces. Added to this is galloping triple-digit inflation which should reach at least 300 percent for calendar 1975.

In coup-prone Argentina, much lesser situations produced military intervention. No constitutionally elected president has finished a term since Juan Peron's first mandate ended in 1952.

Ironically for many Argentines, the current government—generally acknowledged to be the most ineffectual and inefficient in recent times—may sneak through to the end. Elections are scheduled for March, 1977, but Mrs. Peron has said they would be advanced to the end of 1976, a move aimed at ending the current clamoring for her resignation.

If Mrs. Peron sneaks through, it will be because of military unwillingness to visibly take over the reins of government rather than any political acumen on her part. Mrs. Peron is known for her hysteria and ability to be isolated from political reality and not for a wily infighting ability. Her political thinking is done by a small clique of personal advisors. In recent months she has shunned the presidential palace housing her office, located downtown amid the main ministries, preferring the suburban presidential residence where access to her is more difficult.

During one stretch when pressure for her resignation was extremely high, Mrs. Peron was interned in a private hospital for 11 days with a mysterious gallbladder infection. For most of the period she refused to see even her cabinet ministers.

Coupled with this is her arrogance and thin skin regarding criticism, reminiscent of the princess who could feel the pea under 100 mattresses. The presidential press secretary went so far as to announce that Mrs. Peron is only putting in a four-day work week, reserving a three-day weekend as a break from the rigors of office. "Politicians act. Statesmen think. The President's functions is to guide the government. She needs a parenthesis in her work schedule to consider the multiple affairs of state which she will later discuss with ministers and officials," explained the press secretary.

The closest Mrs. Peron came to stepping down was when she agreed in September to take a 32-day leave of absence for "health reasons." As provided by law, the presidency was temporarily filled by the president of the senate, also a Peronist.

As resignation pressures continue to build, she may be forced to take another, more prolonged leave of absence which would virtually keep her out of active office for the rest of her term. To Peronists, this is more acceptable than resigning as it would insure that they continue controlling the presidency. If she resigns, congress would elect a new president with no assurances that it would be a Peronist.

All this political instability adds up to near anarchy. The government lives from day-to-day with little long-range planning or national coordination. Many key areas are unattended. The country has practically no foreign policy. Before Christmas, the ambassadorship to Brazil, one of the most important, had been vacant this year except for two days.

In analyzing the chaos, political observers note that Mrs. Peron was unprepared for what fate threw upon her. She was not her husband's vice-presidential choice because of her political ability, but to avoid a split between rightist and leftist Peronists vying for the number-two spot. Her professional background is as a cabaret dancer. She is still commonly known by her stage name of Isabel. Her main asset is title to the name Peron, which still carries a lot of magic among the working class. Juan Peron cultivated and organized the working class into the most important civilian political and economic forces in the country.

The top levels of the military have not stepped into the current political vacuum for two reasons:

— The previous military government (1966-73) proved to be ineffective, and its growing unpopularity finally caused it to give up and organize civilian elections. It even allowed old enemy Juan Peron to return.

— A coup would reunite the rapidly distintegrating Peronist movement against the military as a common enemy. The failure of the previous military government was due mostly to unified Peronist opposition. Since the return of Peron, most leftists have split from the party, some joining guerrilla groups and others forming rival political parties. Main-line Peronists are further divided among strict supporters of Isabel and people trying to surround her with able ministers who would *de facto* run the government limiting her to a ceremonial role. The

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powerful General Workers Confederation (CGT), backbone of the Peronist movement and the nation's only labor confederation, is equally divided. Top leadership generally supports Mrs. Peron while much grassroots sentiment exists against her labor policies, especially those keeping real wages below rapidly rising inflation. The discontent is reflected in constant wildcat strikes and the setting up of parallel structures to those of the CGT.

Although the military has not taken over, it has ambitiously increased its power until it is now shooting up the countryside at will in the name of counter-insurgency. The military virtually has veto power over important government decisions, with little civilian control over the military. The armed forces commanders sit in on the major cabinet meetings. In November, the military arbitrarily took over the nationwide anti-subversive fight without asking congressional or presidential approval, citing previous laws. Before, federal police were in charge except in the province of Tucuman, where the army has been in control since last February. Besides extending geographic authority, the air force and the navy have also gotten into the act. The air force has started jungle air strikes, while the navy is sending in the marines. Only the army had been involved previously. [Since this dispatch was received, air force officers at the isolated Moró Air Base revolted against Mrs. Peron's government, but apparently failed to spark a wider military uprising necessary for a coup—ed.]

A current bill before congress would increase military authority giving regional commanders power to rule their zones by decree. The military aim seems to be *de facto* rule over the country while maintaining the visible structure of a civilian government.

The military has been chipping away at the Peronist government for quite awhile and pulled a virtual coup last July when they supported the ouster from office and the country of Jose Lopez Rega. Lopez Rega, as minister of social welfare and private secretary to Mrs. Peron, was the power behind the throne. Without military support, civilian pressure for his ouster probably would not have succeeded.

About the only certainty in Argentina's future is increased political violence with most of the guns trained on the left. Over 600 deaths had been registered through November of this year in the political war, three times the number killed in 1974. The death toll for the first four days in December was 32, mostly the result of right-wing terrorism. Right-wing terrorism included the blowing up of a truck containing seven already dead bodies and the murder of nine university students in one operation. Left-wing violence caused the assassination of a retired army general and his wife.

Domestic repression was in full-swing before the military assumed control. Since November, 1974 the country has been under a state of siege which allows people to be arbitrarily held prisoner without formal charges placed against them. Right-wing terrorist groups are also active with apparent government impunity. These para-police, para-union and para-military groups engage in killing and harassing opponents of government officials, dissident labor leaders and non-guerrilla leftists, with special emphasis on lawyers defending subversive suspects and on judges regarded as too lenient.

Complaints to the government that anti-subversive measures never lead to the arrest of right-wing terrorists fall on deaf ears. With or without Mrs. Peron in office, parliamentary and legal circles fear the anti-subversive war will become a purge of the entire left. The politically conservative military is not expected to end right-wing terrorism, leaving this to do the dirty work against non-guerrillas while the military concentrates on armed subversion.

Army commander-in-chief, Gen. Jorge Videla, bluntly outlined the order of the day: "If this is what it takes, in Argentina all the people necessary will die to achieve the security of the country."

GOODMAN VACCARO

(*Goodman Vaccaro is the penname of a journalist specializing in Latin American affairs.*)

SR. ELLEN MURPHY

BEAUTY—A CHARACTER SKETCH

Beauty is well-bred and asks nothing
but that the other be delighted and at ease,
freely left to wonder before a living ocean,
flights of river-spanning bridges, groves of nourishing
orange trees.

She welcomes casually, from doorsteps smiling
with everyday homeland love that a child can endure.
Those facets of her nature unfathomable, rich, disturbing,
she keeps for lovers, suffering, subtle and mature.

With views as vast as seas and firmament
she greets with peace the hurried, crowded gaze
of those who seek her in perplexities.
With the sky's energies she lights the days

with high intent, creating deep content
and discontent. Things ordered and divined
are secrets open as a tree or flower;
a recognition in the poet's mind

of courtesies expected, true, surprising.
In song and conversation she is heard:
meadowlark, Pergolesi, friends; her phrasing
freely endears the listener to her word.

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FROM BRITAIN

AILING SOCIALIZED MEDICINE

Liberal-minded Americans have long felt a special admiration for the British health service ("socialized medicine"), and it must therefore be worrying and disappointing to them to see it apparently disintegrating. I'm not sure how far the troubles we have run into over here, in the health service, have penetrated the news media on the other side of the water; but I feel sure that many Americans who have looked to the British solution to the problems of communal health care through rose-tinted spectacles are now finding their faith sorely tested. It may therefore be worth while offering a few reflections on the background to the current disputes.

As everyone knows, the health service was one of the great legacies of the postwar Labor government in Britain, and was in a special way the child of that government's most dynamic member, Aneurin Bevan. There is a particular kind of concern, therefore, especially among Labor supporters, whenever the health service comes under challenge. It is the finest flower of that Fabian-inspired large-scale social democracy which was at the root of the postwar rebuilding program in Britain. And so it is fundamental to Labor orthodoxy that the health service must be preserved at all costs in all its essentials. Of course, there have been numerous occasions in the past twenty years when bits of the edifice have been eroded; for example charges for medical prescriptions (with exemptions for pensioners and the very poor) came a long time ago. And of course, the whole thing was built upon a compromise with the medical profession, whereby doctors were allowed to use beds in national health hospitals, and the ancillary equipment that went with them, for the treatment of their private, fee-paying patients. Nevertheless, the edifice still, in all essentials, remains standing.

This is because as long as the economy as a whole was expanding, the service was able to progress sufficiently to keep the various opposing factions within it reasonably happy. That is to say, it was possible to focus attention on the improvement of services and the working out of priorities, rather than on conflicting basic principles. The legacy of the nineteenth century, in terms of obsolete buildings, very poor pay for the non-medical staff, gross regional disparities and general shortages of all sorts, was so enormous that such issues as "pay-beds" seemed to be, for the time being, marginal. But now, with the contraction of the economy and the prospect of a standstill in investment, the conflicts of principle that were held at bay in the fifties and sixties have now come out into the open. Talk of the death of the health service focuses the mind wonderfully well on the essentials.

It would be easy to suppose that the basic conflict is simply between the socialist conception of a community health service free and open equally to all, and the conservative "private enterprise" mentality of a medical profession that wishes to retain its status, its money-making potential and its freedom of clinical action. But the present disputes are not as simple as that. There are two main problems in the news just now: the first is the issue of fee-paying medical facilities within national health hospitals, and the other is the pay and conditions of junior hospital doctors. These are quite different kinds of dispute.

The "pay-beds" issue is essentially a conflict between a government that is committed, by its election promises, to phase-out private fee-paying medicine from the health service, and the medical hierarchy, which wants to retain such provision. The doctors' argument for the retention of fee-paying beds is based on two overt premises: one is their own clinical freedom of action, the other is the freedom of patients to choose the kind of medical care they want, and to pay for it if they wish. The government's case is not only that it is unfair, and wrong in principle within the health service, to allow people to "jump the queue" for treatment: it is also that to give over the present private beds to the health service would be the equivalent of building four large new national health service hospitals—no mean consideration in an era of economic contraction. But behind the government's stand also lies the attitude of the trade unions that organize the non-medical workers in the hospitals. These workers (cleaners, porters, cooks etc.) have already put pressure, by various sorts of industrial action, on the government to keep to its promises and they are just as capable as the doctors of bringing the service to a halt if they use their power fully.

The arguments on both sides are full of the usual deliberately misleading claptrap. For example, a senior spokesman for the doctors recently gave the following analogy to the "pay-beds" principle. If people are queuing for a bus, and one of them decides to hail a taxi and pay for it in order to get home quickly, there is no reason for those who choose to wait to feel cheated. But this argument carefully leaves out one essential point: namely that in the medical case the same driver is required for both vehicles. In other words if the bus driver had to get out of his bus to drive the taxi, then of course the people in the queue would have a griev-

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ance. But the claptrap is not all on one side. On the government side, it is claimed that there is no intention to ban private medicine: only to eliminate it from health service facilities. But, as the doctors point out, private medicine without the equipment that health service hospitals provide would become impossibly expensive, especially in remoter areas, and for practical purposes the choice of private treatment would disappear there. There is an analogy here to rival claims of rail and road transport in Britain. If road users themselves had to pay for the provision and maintenance of the roads they use, just as the railways have to do for maintaining their own track, then the enormous advantage at present gained by the motorist who uses roads that are paid for out of public funds would disappear. Similarly, the private patient in a national health service hospital is not really paying for the full cost of his treatment: and if he were asked to, he would have to be very rich to be able to do so.

What this conflict shows is that the dispute is not really about patients' choice, for the options are not fairly set out. It is a conflict between the interests of an entrenched professional minority and the community at large. This is not to say that the issue is simple. But I think Barbara Castle is right all the same to say that the Royal Commission just set up to look into health service problems, should not be allowed to by-pass Parliament in the search for a solution for this particular problem: for it is a political problem of power and national priorities, and as such a matter for Parliament to decide.

The second dispute is quite different. It is partly between the junior hospital doctors (newly qualified doctors working in national health hospitals, and doing most of the spadework) and the government: but it is also between them and the senior members of their own profession.

There is no doubt that the junior doctors have had a rough time, in terms of hours of work and low pay: though it has to be said that their eventual prospects are of course much better than the average for the population. But this situation is partly the result of the hierarchical nature of the medical profession itself and the excessive power wielded in it by the senior people. The dispute is thus partly the result of a certain "democratization" of the profession.

Some junior doctors have actually broken away from the official British Medical Association, and formed their own union to protect their own interests. But it is also a conflict with the government, because the junior doctors—no doubt as part of their "democratization"—have waked up to the fact that they too can "hold the nation to ransom" like any other trade union in a key sector, in order to get what they want—i.e., more money for less hours of work. But unluckily for them, they've done so just at the time when the government's anti-inflation pay policy is beginning to bite and the government certainly won't give them any more money; it will only consider ways of sharing out what is already permitted to them under the pay policy. But the dispute is an interesting one in the long term, because it is partly a case of an old-established profession awakening to its power (and its responsibilities) as a trade union, capable of much militancy when roused. Whatever happens, the future implications are going to be very interesting.

BRIAN WICKER

(*Brian Wicker is* Commonweal's *regular correspondent in Great Britain.*)

WASHINGTON REPORT

HERE WE GO AGAIN

Martial bugles are sounding once again from the command posts in the Executive Branch. This time, the country to be "saved" is newly independent Angola, formerly Portuguese West Africa.

Last month, the United States government let it be known, through background briefings to reporters, that it has been conducting clandestine operations in Angola. The reason this was made known—instead of denied as in the case of our military operations in Laos in the late 1960s—is that our government war-lords are running out of funds and are obliged, under newly enacted provisions of law, to ask the Congress for additional funds.

As the story goes, we've already financed $25-million worth of weapons and other assistance to two of three factions fighting for control of Angola. There are a few artillery-spotter planes, flown by Americans and based in Zaire, which is Angola's northern neighbor, according to what reporters have been told, although it was denied that there are American combat troops or advisers in Angola. Another installment of $25 million is available and some of it may have already been expended by now—the last of the funds available; unless the Congress appropriates more money, which is wanted by the President's men involved in the Angolan operation.

We seem to be supporting a group called the Front for National Liberation of Angola (FNLA). Its chief honcho, at this writing, is a Holden Roberto, identified as a brother-in-law of the President of neighboring Zaire.

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We are also aiding, it is said, a smaller allied group, identified as the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (NUTIA). It is placed in the south, near Angola's neighbor, Namibia (South-West Africa, as it's called by some) which the Republic of South Africa is illegally occupying, according to an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. The Republic of South Africa is also supporting this group, NUTIA. The "bad guys," the third faction, are identified as making up the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). Our government says that in Angola there are Soviet military advisors, Soviet military equipment, and "close to 5000" Cuban soldiers supporting MPLA.

At least, all this, coming from American sources, is "our side" of the story. But, as Senator Clark of Iowa, the thoughtful chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Africa, said recently: "The Congress and the public are very poorly informed about the U.S. role in Angola."

Once again, our involvement in Angola, on the "q.t.," is an example of our government warriors making secret decisions that reflect standardized Cold-War reaction. These decisions may be costly in both money and lives, as was our involvement in Vietnam that cost the lives of more than 55,000 Americans.

The Congress, specifically, and the Americans it represents are entitled to ask some basic questions:

- Is it worthwhile our being in Angola in the first place? Aside from confronting by proxy the Soviet Union, we are giving West African nations an opportunity to scorn us because we are making common cause with the segregationist Republic of South Africa. This is no small consideration in a Continent we have not behaved very well in, anyway.
- Will the Soviet Union really make any progress in Angola if we pull back? So far, the Soviets haven't done very well anywhere in Africa, in the first place. Perhaps, because they're white like us, as much as because they're Marxists.
- History doesn't repeat itself and analogies are risky business, but considering the mess we made in Indochina, another land not central to our well-being in the world, do we really want to involve ourselves in Angola?—First simply funds and an aircraft or two, but perhaps, subsequently, an advisor or two and then troops to advance the interests of the advisors, etc., etc.

Even if the answer to these three questions is "yes," the Congress and the American people, beset by economic problems, are entitled to participate in the decision-making. The Congress should insist on participating.

There's considerable division as to what should be done (and not be done), both in the Congress and within the administration. In mid-December, the Senate foreign-aid subcommittee seemed unwilling to support an amendment to the foreign military aid bill. This amendment, offered by Senator McGovern, would have forbidden covert operations in Angola. On the other hand, at the same meeting, a majority of the Subcommittee, chaired by Senator Humphrey, seemed willing to adopt an amendment offered by Senator Clark that would have forbidden covert operations in Angola *unless* approved by the Congress. Neither amendment came to a formal vote, because it was felt by the majority that the full Foreign Relations Committee, of which the subcommittee is a part, should discuss the matter. The Committee, based on past performance, may be inclined to adopt the Clark position—covert operations openly decided upon. In fact, the Senate did not wait and voted to curb the CIA.

Even if this is the decision arrived at—and supported by the full House—there are problems. Liberation movements that win aren't always permanently friendly to outside helpful nations. The USSR helped Mozambique to nationhood, but it was denied its request that a Mozambique port be open to its warships. The Chinese are more welcome in Africa, including Mozambique, and, again, this may be a factor of color. Another problem for the United States is that a case is being made by members of the Organization of African States (OAS) that we are keeping bad company by our present actions in Angola because they involve supporting at least one group that also has the support of the Republic of South Africa, whose domestically imposed harsh policy of apartheid surely can not endure forever.

Despite these uncertainties and disabilities, Secretary of State Kissinger was being quoted last month while in Brussels that "the United States will try to prevent one party, by means of massive introduction of outside equipment, from achieving dominance . . . the United States can not be indifferent to massive Soviet supplies of arms." This attitude of his seemed inconsistent with his view that there should "not be a war by proxy between the two powers (USA and USSR)." But such a proxy war is just the direction we're headed in. Recently, the President himself has talked about our efforts being aimed at achieving a stand-off between competing factions, but our record is such that our tolerance for "stand-off" in developing countries is quite low—as witness our government's interest years ago in the demise of Premier Lumumba of the Democratic Republic of Congo, now Zaire.

There are sane voices here in town that suggest we back-off in Angola. However, they are few and not emanating from positions of compelling authority. It may make sense to travel to the moon or scale Mount Everest "because it's there," but following the flag to unrewarding sections of the earth, because some government agency covertly placed it there, is pig-headed —and costly.

SISYPHUS

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IN MEMORY OF KING HEROD

PETER STEINFELS

AMONG THAT select group of citizens who still remember, amidst all our current public troubles, a recent episode in the nation's history known as the war in Vietnam, 1965 will be recalled as the year of the Great Escalation. In the first months of that year, the United States began an exercise, picturesquely named Operation Rolling Thunder, intended to bomb the Vietnamese into the Free World; and several months after, as though one war were not enough for a country of our size and vigor, we invaded the Dominican Republic under pretext of removing American citizens from the dangers of a revolution. It would be another year before the editors of *Commonweal* would pen their radical condemnation of American policy in Vietnam, a condemnation which, though it may have run several years ahead of public opinion, was nevertheless, for better or worse, and in my recollection, reached gradually and reluctantly. By the end of 1965, however, besides expressing numerous doubts about the conduct of the war, the editors had grown more than a little weary with the this-hurts-me-more-than-it-hurts-you rationalizations regularly issued by Washington's apologists. Accordingly the magazine's Christmas issue, a decade ago, carried a rather bitter editorial. It was entitled "Herod's Anguished Decision."

"History is often unfair to men who have to make hard decisions," it began. "King Herod, the traditional villain of the Christmas story, is a good example." Herod's conclusion that the alleged new king should be put to death "was not, we must suppose, an easy decision," the editorial pointed out; and if we are tempted to say that his "was a rather excessive way of handling the matter" and may have "violated some traditional norms of morality; yet that would be uncharitable, at least until all the facts are in. St. Matthew's account is interesting but hardly sufficient . . . he has no grasp of the demands of responsible political leadership. A good clue to this is that St. Matthew does not bother mentioning the king's duty to preserve his people from the obvious dangers of upstart revolutionaries. Nor does he take the trouble to point out that the slaying of the innocents was not done with malice toward them personally, but for the sake of the common good of his people. We have no reason to suppose that Herod was unsympathetic to the weeping of Rachel; war is hell, as the general once said, and no one knows this better than the man who has to make the decisions."

Besides the above, the editorial contained thinly cloaked references to the domino theory and the need for negotiations; it closed with the somewhat heavy barb, "If we try, we can all find a Herod to support." Was it possible that the intent of such an editorial could be missed? Much to their amazement, the editors received a number of letters from readers who seemed not merely to have drunk of the good wine of Niebuhrianism but to have fried their brains in it. They congratulated the magazine for finally seeing the other side of the story, for recognizing the ambiguity, the complexity, the tragic irony of Herod's predicament. An admiring professor of education had even assigned the editorial to his classes and given them a reading comprehension on the multiple-choice test indicated that he, too, had completely missed the point.

I am put in mind of this episode, which was amusing and not so amusing, every time I encounter the uses, usually ironic, to which modern writers have put the figure of Herod. Conor Cruise O'Brien, for instance, has written a play, *King Herod Explains*, of which I have seen only a few passages; in these the king defends his cruelties as relatively minor and no less justified politically than the millions of deaths ordered by twentieth-century statesmen. W. H. Auden, in his "Christmas Oratorio," *For the Time Being*, gives Herod a long and marvelous speech. Auden's Herod is an enlightened progressive, an apostle of rationality and economic development. Standing at night by the window of his citadel, he muses on the order and prosperity brought by his rule. "Soft drinks and sandwiches may be had in the inns at reasonable prices. . . . The highway to the coast goes straight up over the mountains and the truck-drivers no longer carry guns." Of course, there still "isn't a single town where a good bookshop would pay," but "it is a beginning. In twenty years the darkness has been pushed back a few inches."

For Herod, the entire Empire is only "a tiny patch of light," outside of which barbaric superstition ranges. And "even inside this little civilized patch itself," established "at the cost of heaven knows how much grief and bloodshed," the old passionate disorder always threatens to break out. People want a God like themselves. "Reason is helpless, and now even the Poetic Compromise no longer works"—those charming tales about the Olympians.

Herod dreads the counter-culture which would flourish should the public get the human, sentimental God it yearns for: "Reason will be replaced by Revelation. . . . Knowledge will degenerate. . . . Whole cosmogonies will be created out of some forgotten personal resentment . . . the daubs of schoolchildren ranked above the greatest masterpices. . . . Life after death will be an eternal dinner party" and the energy of the masses diverted from "its normal and wholesome outlet in patriotism and civic or family pride."

(Continued on page 31)

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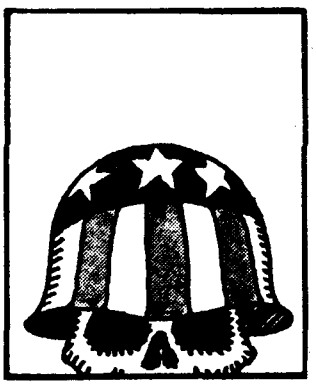
APRIL 20, 1989

ROBERT ALAN COOK



Fascism comes to the United States

The danger . . . is that today, with populations and homelessness everywhere on the increase, masses of people are continuously rendered superfluous if we continue to think of our world in utilitarian terms. Political, social, and economic events everywhere are in a silent conspiracy with totalitarian instruments devised for making men superfluous. . . . The Nazis and the Bolsheviks can be sure that their factories of annihilation which demonstrate the swiftest solution to the problem of overpopulation, of economically superfluous and socially rootless human masses, are as much of an attraction as a warning. Totalitarian solutions may well survive the fall of totalitarian regimes in the form of strong temptations which will come up whenever it seems impossible to alleviate political, social, or economic misery in a manner worthy of man. —HANNAH ARENDT, 1964

IT HAS BEEN my singular good fortune to be able to study the contents of the "time capsule" over these past few months, in time for the 100th anniversary of Hitler's birthday. Of course, I cannot relate the way in which the documents came into my possession, for fear of endangering others. Suffice it, then, that the capsule's inscription showed that it was buried in Boston during the 1976 Bicentennial of the First Republic. Having once been acquainted with some of the materials, I have no reason to doubt this. Furthermore, the documents agree on enough specific and voluminous data that a government-authored hoax seems most unlikely. Simpler techniques would suffice to ensnare the odd remaining skeptic and keep the torture cells occupied.

The story the documents tell is simply incredible—that while America was moving so inexorably toward the colossal slaughter to come, the sense of danger scarcely touched any but a handful of intellectuals. As I remember the 1970s, the people at large had no sense of the impending cataclysm. Even political and business leaders went well out of their way during democracy's last decade to avoid facing the most basic issues. The documents confirm these recollections. The price of this evasion, of this exercise of the constitutional right to ignorance, has been the Terror.

We are now in the fourth year of the Terror, and with millions already dead, it shows no sign of abating. Millions of others who, in one way or another, opposed fascism are now in prisons or concentration camps. These include intellectuals, politicians (both liberal and conservative), ecologists, black and other minority leaders, lawyers, teachers, union leaders, liberal business people, and several other "dangerous types." Perhaps the dead are the more fortunate, for rumors abound of torture and hideous conditions in the prisons and camps. America, so recently free to languish in decadence, is undergoing "revitalization" through the awful rigors of the seemingly endless totalitarian Hell. Of course, there are those who see a certain inevitability in all this. They question whether an 18th century form of government could ever have resolved the uniquely 20th century crises of ecological breakdown, rising tides of violence, and ever-growing masses of economically superfluous people. Still, I think the documents show that as of the middle 1970s there was a chance that we would come to our senses in time.

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Some of the following descriptions of the recent past are drawn from memory, particularly as to the years succeeding 1976, for which only the official "histories" are available. I have also drawn some logical, indeed often obvious, deductions from information that was available well before 1976. Of course, committing it to paper is folly, but I hold to the slender hope that the prophet George Orwell was right when he suggested that "There was truth and there was untruth, and if you clung to the truth even against the whole world, you were not mad." Anyway, my friends and I feel relatively safe from the secret police, hidden as we are deep in the Canadian wilderness. As last resort, however, we keep our cyanide capsules within easy reach.

It seems that a collision between population increase and food supplies had been anticipated by most students of the subject as early as the 1960s, with the loudest chorus of alarm rising in the early 1970s. In 1975 the world population stood at 4 billion; by 1985 it was approaching 5 billion; and nearly 7 billion were seriously expected by the year 2000. Still, responsible studies showed that despite the fears raised by the minifamines of the early 1970s, the world's available arable land could support a population many times larger than even the year-2000 estimate. Harvard population expert Roger Revelle, for example, calculated that if all the world's arable land were cultivated with the techniques, equipment, irrigation, and fertilizer used on most American farm lands in the early 1970s, the world could support some 30 to 40 billions.

Obviously, this was neither necessary nor probable, but immensely expensive. Completely modernizing the backward agriculture of what used to be called "developing" countries would have cost hundreds of billions of dollars. Success in such a venture would also have depended upon the availability of petroleum for mechanized equipment, irrigation pumping, fertilizer manufacture, and transport of food to urban areas. Americans, happily ignoring the 55-m.p.h. speed limit in their 400-horse-power cars, might have behaved with less callous indifference—as might also have the automobile manufacturers.

While these ruminations are largely academic to the situation of the present world population, stabilized at 4½ billion, they at least serve to make the point that the actual tide of events *could* have been different if the American people had had the will to make it so. It was not in our power to feed the world, but we clearly could have helped the world feed itself, even in the hard-core famine lands of the African Sahel, India, and Bangladesh. More than anything else, underdeveloped agriculture needed capital-intensive inputs, primarily fertilizers and water supply systems. Only the wealthy nations could provide the capital.

As an interim policy, we could have provided significant food aid from our surplus grains. But America did not seem to see it that way. To the contrary, the candid then-Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz told the United Nations' 1974 Food Conference in Rome that food was "a tool in the kit of American diplomacy." Which was probably no surprise to most delegates. In 1975, James P. Grant, President of the Overseas Development Council, summed up the U.S. agricultural policy:

> By early 1974, the United States—the food and fertilizer center of the world—was not implementing even the semblance of global food policy beyond that of maximum profits for agricutural exports, which increased from approximately $9 billion in 1972 to $22 billion in 1974. *United States food aid in fiscal year 1974 amounted to less than 40 percent of the average volume provided in the late 1960s and early 1970s*; approximately one-half of that greatly reduced total went to Indochina. There was an even more drastic cutback in fertilizer shipments from the United States under the aid program. (Emphasis supplied.)

LONG A PEOPLE as wealthy and spoiled as the earth had ever seen, Americans began to sense the rising anger and hatred of the so-called Third World in the 1960s, thanks in large part to American activities in the Congo, the Dominican Republic, Vietnam, and assorted other "hot spots." But by the time the Vietnam war was over, the anger was more general in the sense that it was expressed as the natural rage of poor against rich, of exploited against exploiters. At the same time, American aid to the poor nations steadily diminished as a percentage of America's gross national product, from one-half of 1 percent in 1965 to two-tenths of 1 percent in 1975.

In any meaningful sense, American policy in the middle and late 1970s was one of rather steady withdrawal from the problems of the underdeveloped world. As the documents make clear, it was no accident that that retreat coincided with economic troubles in the major industrialized powers and with steadily deteriorating conditions in the poorest countries. Politics became polarized almost everywhere. *Coups* and civil wars in such places as India, Bangladesh, Nigeria, and Angola drained vital energies, left countless dead, and installed iron dictatorships throughout the underdeveloped world, all of them heavily armed. The world began dividing itself into trading blocs. More fundamentally, the earth's nations began to align themselves according to their respective roles in the world economy: the manufacturers of goods, the raw materials suppliers, and the paupers who had nothing to sell (the "Fourth World.") A deal between resource suppliers and the industrialized nations seemed possible, but relations were strained, to say the least.

In the early and middle Seventies American power was ebbing quite visibly: debacle in Vietnam, a despic-

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ably petty show of force in Cambodia, impotence in the face of the oil cartel, a debilitating struggle between Congress and the Executive over a variety of issues, continuing racial tension and violence, and running throughout a deteriorating economy. All of this and more heartened America's enemies to the point of vehement castigation and defiance in the United Nations. Confrontation became the order of the day. The impending death of the UN was evident in the mid-Seventies to any who cared to examine the situation. The only mystery was why the United States did not go under to fascism much earlier than it did. Without reliable documentation on the later years, I can only speculate. Perhaps the traditions of democracy and liberty were stronger than I, for one, had given credence. Perhaps the world sensed the danger that America would seize upon violence as a substitute for real power, and shrank back from the prospect.

Meanwhile, the Soviet Union, self-sufficient in resources, highly industrialized, yet locked into a growing dependency upon America for grains and sophisticated technology, gradually assumed a posture of neutrality in the supplier-consumer confrontations. The same logic began to overtake China as well. Revolutionary fervor waned as industrialization increasingly occupied her attentions and as her interests began to coincide with those of other industrial powers. Still, throughout the 1970s China remained the champion of the Third and Fourth Worlds. More profoundly, however, her population growth continued to press against agricultural development, maintaining a marginal dependency upon North American grain supplies.

And so the Seventies passed, with world population growth steadily accelerating toward the 100-million-a-year mark that it reached in 1985. But while world population increased by 2 percent per year, and food production increased by 2.5 percent world *demand* for food was expanding at 3 percent, or 30 million tons of grain, per year—nearly equivalent to the combined grain exports of Canada, Australia, and Argentina. Fully one-third of the increase in demand was due to the affluent countries' growing consumption of animal protein, especially beef. (It takes ten pounds of vegetable protein to produce one pound of beef protein.) Indeed, by the mid-1970s the average American was consuming the equivalent of 10,000 cereal calories per day. The average Bengali consumed 1800.

A few pluses were registered, though: fertilizer production was expanded (not nearly enough, of course, thanks in large part to the capital shortage); the "Green Revolution" developed a few new varieties of high-yield grains; we were spared serious drought. But throughout this period the main causes of food shortage persisted: forced Third and Fourth World dependancy upon cash crops, such as coffee and sugar, tying down vast tracts of good land (much of it owned by the multi-

American policy in the middle and late 1970s was one of rather steady withdrawal from problems of the underdeveloped world. . . . It was no accident that that retreat coincided with economic troubles in the major industrial powers . . .

national corporations); inefficiency in the agriculture of the underdeveloped world and widespread governmental corruption; hopelessly inadequate assistance from the rich nations; feudally stratified societies and systems of land tenure, often protected by American money and power; American, European, and Japanese squandering of vegetable protein on grain-fed beef; and American ornamental usage of fertilizer (as much on our lawns, cemeteries, and golf courses in the mid-1970s—a time of shortage—as India could procure for all her agriculture).

Nor were the poorest countries able to reduce their birth rates significantly. This last was fastened upon by Americans to rationalize their unabated taste for beef: "If they don't want to stop having kids, then to hell with 'em. Let 'em starve. This country raised itself by its own bootstraps; so can they." For some reason or other, demographers could not get across to the American people that in poor agrarian countries it *paid* a peasant to have several children to help work the land and ultimately to support him in his old age. These countries simply did not have the wealth to provide anything like social security or pensions. Forms of foreign aid that could have helped cut the birth rate included education for women and construction of rural health clinics to reduce infant and child mortality. In short, massive assistance to agriculture and birth control, both directly and indirectly, was desperately needed. It was not forthcoming.

And the fact that the West bore primary responsibility for the late-20th-century condition of its former colonies was virtually ignored. In colonial times, the metropolitan powers had typically abetted colonial population growth—unwittingly, to be sure—by introducing public sanitation and the cheaper forms of modern medicine, partly to protect their own agents, soldiers, missionaries, engineers, and the like from disease, partly for humanitarian reasons. But such vast amounts of natural *wealth* were transferred to Europe, and later to the United States, that conditions favoring birth-rate reduction—literacy and a higher standard of living generally—could never arise in most newly independent nations.

Population experts knew that nations pass through a

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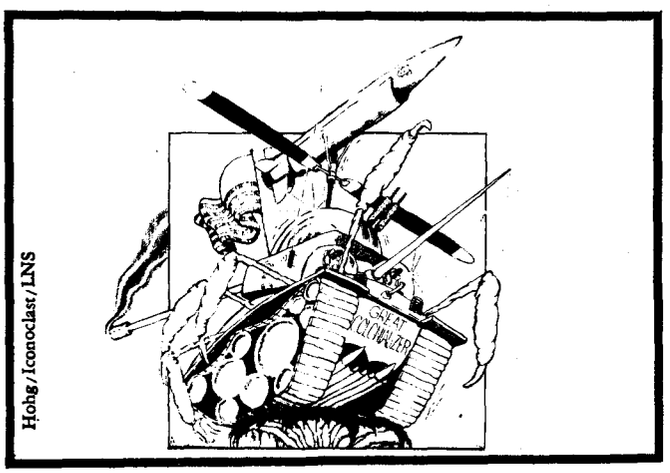
"demographic transition" from high to low birth rates in response to improvement in the standard of living. Rising standards typically yield a coherent pattern. First comes a rapid increase in population growth—as occurred in 19th-century Europe, which was able to dump its excess numbers on America. Only later is there a fall in the birth rate. That too happened in Europe, Japan, and America in the mid-20th century. Child and infant mortality decreased (and with it the perceived necessity for numerous births), and accumulated social wealth relieved parents of the need for support from their children. In this process there seemed to be a critical point such that when the death rate fell below this figure (found by the ecologist Barry Commoner to be about 20 deaths per 1000 persons), the birth rate began to drop dramatically.

In many countries of the Third World, the birth rates had indeed begun to drop rather sharply by the early 1970s. Usually, these were countries that either had valuable resources, such as tin in Thailand or oil in Venezuela, or pools of literate but easily exploitable labor attractive to the then-flourishing multinational corporations, as in South Korea and Taiwan (which enjoyed the additional advantage of being chosen as Asia's "showcases of capitalism"). But in countries not so favored by Nature or American largesse, the all-important second half of the demographic transition could not take place.

YET, WHILE ALL this was well understood, scarcely anyone in the West would assent to a simple proposition: that since we had in fact *financed* our own demographic transition in substantial part with the natural wealth and cheap labor of the Third and Fourth Worlds over a century and a half of colonialism and neocolonialism, perhaps a *debt* was implied. And so, assistance to the underdeveloped countries (which should have been called "back pay") failed by many orders of magnitude to approach the level necessary to reverse the deadly trend.

The case, it appears, was not very different from white America's approach to its own racial question: by all means, let the blacks go to the same movies with whites, eat in the same restaurants, and even attend the same schools—so long as the whites participating in integration were themselves mostly of the lower classes—but no back pay, no "affirmative action," to redress the deeper grievances stemming from three centuries of slavery and oppression. That was America's attitude toward one-tenth of its own population in the fat Sixties. Why should it be different for the hungry (and mostly non-white) half of the world's population in the lean Seventies?



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Obeying the same liberal instincts that had prevailed in the 1960s—namely, to offer a few extra crumbs when it appeared that the poor might turn to theft and extortion—the Ford administration, via its "Super-Secretary" Henry Kissinger, offered the Third and Fourth Worlds a package deal in a UN Special Session in September, 1975. Total cost to the American taxpayers: $60 million, roughly the price of three jet fighters. The meager offer did manage to evoke the desired response: division of the Third and Fourth Worlds' common front. There was more negotiation and rhetoric; there was no real progress. At about the same time, Dr. Philip Handler, President of the National Academy of Sciences, added his voice to those of food and population experts everywhere, sounding a clear warning:

> It seems imperative that the situation in the "Fourth World" be understood as thoroughly as possible by our policy makers, those of the other developed nations, and those who control the accumulating capital of the oil exporting nations. For the present, their plight can be alleviated only by food aid, as required. But, for the longer term, the decision must be either to make a truly all-out effort to assist those areas to attain self-sufficiency or to abstain. A partial effort, such as minimal food aid, alone, is probably counterproductive. Assistance which barely manages to keep people alive and hungry and without hope leaves them in just the state in which there is no incentive for family planning, thereby feeding population growth rather than checking it.

This was precisely the level that American aid reached and never exceeded. Somewhat cynically, we pleaded incapacity. Our oil bill was too high. The weather could have been better. Above all, we were plagued by inflation and unemployment. Capitalism, it is true, was entering its greatest crisis. Students of ecology had been virtually united—at least since the publication of *The Limits to Growth* in 1972—on the point that the earth's ecosphere could not tolerate indefinite economic growth. The only serious question in dispute was how close we were to the limit.

When the question was translated into matters political and social, as it was in the energy crisis, it began

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to appear to many that the world had already overshot its capacity for control. An economist and social critic, Robert Heilbroner, put an end to the debate in a dismally accurate forecast, *An Inquiry into the Human Prospect*, published in 1974. Heilbroner demonstrated that capitalism could not survive the ecological crisis and move to a state of non-growth, because it could not in such a condition satisfy the economic and social demands of its lower classes without substantially reducing the share of the total wealth held by the upper-income groups. The capitalist system had long relied upon growth of income at all levels as the barrier to serious class conflicts. Thus, to extrapolate from Heilbroner's analysis, a stationary American economy could survive only by taking one of two routes: either a general redistribution of wealth (in other words, all-out socialism) or totalitarian fascist repression.

By the mid-1970s it was clear that we were drifting toward fascism, as the country struggled with stalling growth in the forms of unemployment, inflation, and attendant ills. A grossly inordinate share of the unemployment burden was thrust upon the blacks, who suffered twice the national average and whose ghettos descended into the long night that still persists, with ghetto unemployment ranging from 40 percent to 60 percent in the middle Seventies. Even worse for the blacks and other "disadvantaged" groups, government at all levels began taking the line that it would have to cut back social services in order to balance budgets, fight inflation, and fend off municipal bankruptcy. As for ideology, it was held that government should be taken "out of the lives of the people." What this formulation purposely ignored was that curtailment of social services would drive more of the poor to crime, in which occupation government got very much into their lives.

All of this assumed a certain logical progression as business and government scraped the bottom of every available barrel to find the capital needed to recover the revered 4 percent growth rate that would sustain the class structure and keep revolutionaries out of business. Every barrel, that is, except for the defense budget, which was logical, since our policies ensured that in the end we would need the weapons. But capital was scarce. In 1975, the New York Stock Exchange, considering only the needs of the domestic economy to maintain a "normal" growth rate, projected a capital shortage over the next ten years of $650 billion. Note that this calculation took into account neither the needs of the Third and Fourth Worlds nor the staggering $500 billion need of the energy industry to capitalize "Project Independence" (national independence from foreign energy sources by 1985), a figure that represented double the rate of capitalization of the industry over the preceding twenty years. Of course, barely enough was found to sustain growth (at somewhat less than 4 percent)—and we continued to ignore the underdeveloped countries—since inflation persisted with a vengeance throughout the Seventies and early Eighties, mainly driven, according to many economists, by incessantly growing world demand for food, fuel, and raw materials. And the inevitable wage-price spiral that followed upon this pull drove otherwise sober thinkers to suggest that perhaps economic pluralism had outlived its utility.

As for the American Left, so magnificent in the days of Vietnam, it had ceased, for all serious purposes, to exist after a decade of police brutality, F.B.I. infiltration, and internal bickering over tactics.

How, in these circumstances, could anyone expect the United States to provide the money, technology, and equipment on the massive scale needed to improve Third and Fourth World agriculture dramatically? That is to say, who would suggest that we cut back on defense budgets, or on our standard of living, or move to redistribute wealth? What confluence of political groupings and forces would support what would have amounted to a substantial transfer of wealth to the beggared nations, with a concomitant reduction of the American standard of living?

Organized labor, long ago looked to as America's hope for economic justice, was scrambling to hold its share of a near-stagnant pie. The Business Establishment held on for dear life, begged the federal government for more help, and pleaded with everyone not to rock the boat. (As in the Vietnam war, "experts" professed to see the ubiquitous "light at the end of the tunnel.") The hard-pressed middle classes looked to their own defenses against exponentially rising crime, taxes, and prices.

Truly, with soaring violence, alcoholism, gambling, and public indebtedness, drug addiction, inflation, unemployment suburban sprawl, racial tension, and rotting cities, the American scene could only be described as a state of siege. As for the American Left, so magnificent in the days of Vietnam, it had ceased, for all serious purposes, to exist after a decade of police brutality, F.B.I. infiltration, and internal bickering over tactics.

This was America in the 1970s. This was the country whose common man sniffed anarchy in the wind and flocked to films of violence, making an actor named Clint Eastwood, a consistent portrayer of fascist types, the biggest money-maker in Hollywood. This was the land where there were as many privately owned guns as there were homes, where psychopathic assassins lurk-

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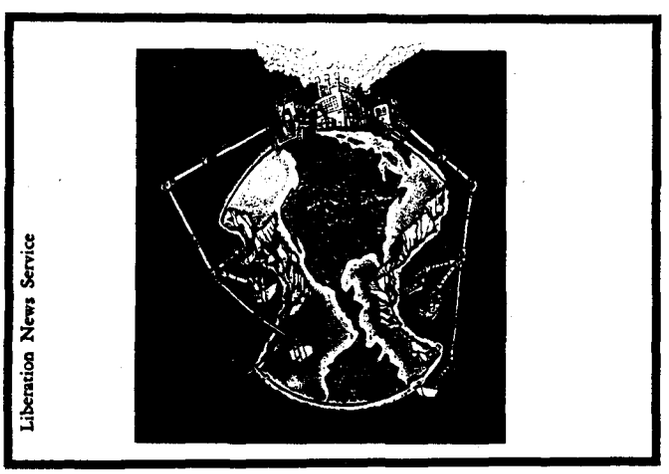
ed for political leaders, where a Vietnam war criminal named William Calley walked free after 40 months of house arrest. (He only "zapped" 22 unarmed "gooks.") From all this to fascism was not a large step. A few decades earlier, the Nazis had thoroughly understood, and capitalized upon, the powerful attraction of violence. Now it was America's turn, offering the connoisseur a wide range, from the chrome-plated violence of "A Clockwork Orange" and the Manson "Family" to the penultimate gray steel of Attica Prison and Kent State.

AMERICA WAS ripe for triage. Triage was a system devised in World War I for sorting the wounded when they overwhelmed field medical facilities. The wounded were placed in three categories: those who would probably die even if treated immediately, those who would probably live even if treatment were delayed, and those who were likely to survive only if given immediate attention. In conditions of scarce supplies, equipment, and staff, only the third group received immediate care. The first group was left to die outside the tent, so that the overtaxed system could provide proper treatment for those who could be saved.

Triage is a harsh principle, but sensible and appropriate to the battlefield. A number of food and population experts in the late 1960s and early 1970s had also advocated the idea as a solution to the growing problem of too many people and too little food. The argument was that inevitably many would starve; better then that millions starve in the 1970s and 1980s than billions in the 1990s. It also had the considerable advantage of being the cheapest of all possible solutions: simply to withdraw all food aid from the largest and poorest nations (chief among them India and Bangladesh) and dispense it in other countries more likely to develop their agricultural potential. Some advocates of triage preferred to call it "lifeboat ethics," which doubtless *felt* better.

Such was the "pure" theory of triage. Of course, it had to be tempered by attention to American national interest. American grains, next to weapons our most valuable export and thus a critical factor in the nation's balance of payments, had always been sold first to our friends and allies, second to those others who could afford them, and lastly given to those who needed them most. (In effect, our food policy—and our foreign aid —had always been an embryonic triage, with some nations receiving much more than others.)


Liberation News Service

No one suggested that we curtail shipments to Western Europe or Japan (who together had so far outstripped their agricultural potential that they imported some 30 million tons of grain a year in the early 1970s— as opposed to the 1½ million tons that India could barely afford). No triage advocate suggested refusing food to the oil-producing countries, or to other countries that sold us critical raw materials, or to those that were strategically situated. (The U.S. was then and still is heavily dependent upon such countries as Brazil, Gabon, Jamaica, Canada, Mexico, the Philippines, South Africa, Spain, Thailand, Chile, and Zaire for our imports of critical minerals including manganese, nickel, platinum, tin, zinc, bauxite, chromium, cobalt, columbium, fluorspar, mercury, titanium, copper, and even iron ore. None of these nations will suffer from famine so long as it is in America's power to prevent it. Fortunately, few of them are heavily populated, and in any case, all of them are now police states that experience little difficulty in maintaining order in times of shortage.)

It is now perfectly clear that we drifted steadily in the 1970s toward triage; our indifference rendered it all but inevitable. As was typical with democracies, the U.S. government did not plan for crises; it simply staggered into them. Politicians in such systems were rarely able or willing to alert the masses to impending trouble. Political "leaders" were in truth followers of public opinion polls, and had neither time, energy, nor incentive to initiate future-oriented action. At the same time, the Department of Agriculture perceived its function as one of protecting the interests of American farmers and cattlemen. It went so far as to argue in a 1975 pamphlet, "Is the World Facing Starvation?" (answer: of course not) that it would do no good for anyone to reduce his beef consumption because "somebody else would eat more and cancel you out." (For God's sake, don't anyone start a *movement*!) And, as might have been expected, all appeals to Americans to reduce their standard of living in the interest of global distributive justice aroused nothing but bemused incredulity.

How we did in fact come to triage and fascism is almost a matter of indifference today. There were three possible routes. First, a drought in the Midwest at almost anytime in the late 1970s or early 1980s would have pushed even a democratic government into triage, for grain reserves had never been replenished to the pre-1972 level, largely because of the economic and political pressures to sell. Triage, in turn, would have

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yielded fascism as the only system capable of handling the resultant domestic and international conflicts and dislocations.

The second possibility was that a fascist movement might come to power by democratic means, much as the Nazis had done in 1933, preaching triage as the panacea for America's multitudinous woes. Several such groups existed and gained strength rather steadily in the middle and late Seventies, and on into the Eighties. The John Birch Society, an early precursor, more than doubled its membership in 1974-75 alone. The true power of the Right in times of crisis has always been its appeal to the near-universal preference for order over anarchy; whereas the Left typically sought *disorder* by striking at society's weakest points. This was a lesson of the 1930s, when the Left failed everywhere in Europe and the iron radical Right prevailed. But, for a variety of rather ad hoc reasons, the organized "Far Right" failed to carry a majority of the country.

Finally, there was the possibility—which became the reality—of a *coup d'état*. But let this not be taken as historical accident, for the *coup* could never have succeeded without widespread support. Those who made the *coup* understood this, and only moved (in 1985) after mass demonstrations for triage—and an end to foreign aid generally—had failed to push the President, a basically decent man, to firm action. For, by the late 1970s, two decades of malignant neglect had brought the food-population problem to the predictable point of intractable crisis, so that triage may well have become the only feasible policy. At home, the economy had continued to bump along at a level little better than stagnation. The people were sick of "give-aways" and wanted draconian measures. To defend not their lives but their *standard* of living, Americans were prepared to kill by the millions.

In retrospect, it is clear that liberal democracy was incapable of imposing the triage solution—and making it stick—for in the end it meant a global race war. For this, democratic society was inadequately organized. I doubt that even Richard Nixon could have handled it—at least not on the old ground rules.

A central contradiction between triage and liberal democracy arose from the fact that the latter functioned through a plural system of elites, each responsible to its own power base and prepared to compromise on most issues. Triage would brook no compromise, no modifications. It is an iron policy that depends upon consistent application over several years in order to be optimally successful. It is, in fact, the ultimate act of modern technological government, with antecedents firmly rooted in the Third Reich and its technological "Final Solution to the Jewish Question." The core idea of triage is that the mere existence of certain groups of people constitutes a danger to the rest. Their liquidation follows as a matter of course.

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Triage is genocide; a nation that attempts the one must be capable of the other. And, of course, what made triage especially appealing to fascists was its implicit racism. It was hardly a secret that most, if not all, of those who would starve under triage were black, brown, and yellow people.

Within the United States, of course, blacks in particular had become a serious drag on the economic system in the 1970s, since such a large proportion of them were unemployed and thus dependent upon social services largely paid for by the white majority. And, as more and more of them were driven to crime, they became a further drag on the social system. Thus far, however, the government has not set out to exterminate the race. Only a million or so have died, due to the Terror and occasional assaults on the urban guerrilla strongholds. The embattled ghettos now differ only in size from that of Warsaw in 1940. Still, rumors persist that the Army and the secret police battalions will soon sweep up all 30 million blacks and feed them to the ovens in a domestic exercise of social triage. It should not be difficult, actually, since all blacks, Puerto Ricans, and Chicanos have been barred from military and police service since 1986, doubtless because they would likely prove unreliable in "pacifying" their own people.

IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING the August, 1985 *coup* (just before the crop was in) we cut off all food aid to India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, and simultaneously canceled their purchases. Canada, dependent as ever on American good will and fearful of invasion if she demurred, reluctantly followed suit. Australia and New Zealand likewise opted for triage. Most of what followed could have been foreseen by anyone possessing a modicum of common sense: rancorous sessions in the "United Nations of the Third World" (the truncated successor to the UN, which dissolved in 1978); India's short-lived invasion of Burma, turned back by joint U.S.-Chinese intervention; mass starvation, disease, riots, and general chaos throughout the Indian subcontinent; and finally, India's

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In the mid-1970s, there was much talk about the 'commodity power' of small nations. . . . But apparently no foe had counted on the awesome finality with which a totalitarian state that happened to be the world's largest food producer would wield the new 'food power.'

abortive attempt to force a transfer of food via nuclear blackmail. This last, in 1986, proved somewhat costly to the United States Indian agents assembled an atomic bomb of Hiroshima-size power in New York, secreted it in the subway system, and demanded two million tons of wheat. The U.S. government spurned this revisitation of Munich and countered with the threat of powerful but unspecified retaliation if the bomb should detonate. India destroyed half of Manhattan, and we took out Bombay, Madras, and New Delhi. (Calcutta was considered a disaster in its normal condition and so was permitted to continue to starve.)

For the U.S., that was only the beginning. There remained more serious prospects. A terrorist organization that remained anonymous might plant a bomb —or perhaps several bombs simultaneously in a number of cities. The government stationed troops at every nuclear power plant and experimental center in the country. Troops and police were authorized to search suspicious vehicles, persons, and buildings without warrant or probable cause. (Despite these measures, we lost some of Los Angeles to terrorists just last year, but things have been quiet since then.) The Navy set up a blockade of the Indian subcontinent to prevent smuggling of food and to search outgoing vessels for nuclear weapons and parts. And the danger of illegal immigrants from hungry lands dealt the final *coup de grace* to American liberty: a rigorously enforced internal passport system (which the Immigration Service had actually recommended in the early 1970s). A greatly expanded F.B.I. (in effect now a secret police force) undertook surveillance of all persons of Asiatic descent.

There were no demonstrations in protest against any of these measures after the initial agitations against triage had been met with machine guns. The FBI and the Army launched the Terror with their roundup of thousands of dissidents and "subversives." The government, it seems, had long since constructed a small number of concentration camps, pursuant to the 1950 Emergency Detention Act. Many new camps were now hastily built to accommodate the flood of inmates. The garrison state had at last arrived.

In 1986 the regime extended triage to the African Sahel nations, and Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, and Central America. It must have been this move to near-total triage that brought the return to military conscription, since several of our client states in Africa, Asia, and Latin America suddenly faced the prospect of invasion from the starving countries. We had to defend our resource base. Similarly, there was always the danger that a resource supplier might embargo us out of ideological or racial sympathy with nations "triaged out."

Such was the case of Zaire's attempt to embargo exports of cobalt to the U.S. in 1987. Less than 48 hours after Zaire's announcement, an American Strike Force based on islands in the Indian Ocean seized the mines. According to reports that followed (biased, no doubt, but probably correct on the main points), U.S. Army personnel worked the mines and successfully protected some 75 percent of all rail shipments to port. Robot tanks with 30-foot chain saws, five abreast, cleared "free-fire" lanes on both sides of the tracks. Computerized human detection systems with automatic fire-control mechanisms kept the mines, railroad, and port facilities under constant surveillance, backed up by helicopter gunships armed with the latest in laser cannon. These systems, however, probably could not have prevented longer-distance guerrilla action, such as mortar and rocket fire. I can only surmise that systematic genocide served as an ancillary tactic in neighboring districts. In any case, the radical Zaire government fell in less than four months and was replaced by one friendly to our cause. The "automated battlefield" (predicted by General Westmoreland in 1974) proved another ace in the hole for American fascism.

The race war, of course, rages on intermittently in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, moderated only by the compliance of various regimes with our mineral resource needs. With these states, our relationship has become one of barter: their metals and oil for our food and weapons, and often our assistance in keeping down rebel movements and foreign invasions. In some cases, we have fed and protected other client states that have no resources, but whose geographic positions render them strategically valuable for protective activity. Probably these scattered wars will never end since our government, *à la* Orwell's *1984*, seems to perceive them as a good part of its *raison d'etre*. This must be the case, for we could surely have liquidated our enemies by now, if only with racial-specific microbiological weapons. But the government appears to be content to practice genocide on the "budget plan," i.e., just enough to maintain world population stability.

In this situation, the simple power to feed or starve

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may well become the "ultimate weapon." In the mid-1970s there was much talk of the "commodity power" of small nations, and for a time this appeared to be a serious threat. The industrial democracies quailed before the cartels' price hikes and threats of embargo. But apparently no one had counted on the awesome finality with which a totalitarian state that happened to be the world's largest food producer would wield the new "food power." Unlike metals, nothing can be substituted for food; it is difficult to stockpile (impossible without expensive facilities and then only for rather short duration); it is difficult if not impossible to seize. None of these strictures has inhibited our approach to the supply of metals and oil.

The total situation varies considerably from Orwell's scenario, in that we have no great-power enemies capable of sophisticated military technology. The most probable candidates of 15 years ago, China and the Soviet Union, have come to depend more upon the rest of the industrialized world than upon the old ideological alliances. Rumor has it, actually, that they may yet join our proposed "Alliance for a Stable Population" (ASP). Western Europe and Japan, of course, fell into line with us early in the game. Inflation has already driven Britain, Italy, and Japan to fascism ahead of us; the rest could not withstand the fascist momentum. Without protest, they have assisted our efforts toward "stabilization" in Africa and Asia. Such assistance is merely part of the high price of food and raw materials. In the case of Japan, we have had to make our peace with an obvious inconsistency in our racial ideology, but then the Germans had had little trouble with the same problem in the 1940s. No, the alliance follows the rather logical pattern of rich against poor. With the exception of Japan (and perhaps soon of China), that pattern conforms to racial divisions and it is a white man's world.

Well, that about sums it up. Triage, I must report, is working admirably. Through starvation, disease, and war we have killed about four hundred million people over the past four years (according to official reports), for an annual average nearly double the total killed in the six years of World War II. And the best part of it is that most of these were children, who from the technical point of view were the most dangerous members of the target populations, since they might otherwise have reproduced themselves. In these circumstances, democracy could never have survived triage, if only because of television. Could we as a people have borne watching unending years of mass starvation in our living rooms? The government-controllel media have spared us this vicarious agony. Which is just as well; they still give us good coverage of the fighting. After all, starvation is not nearly as much fun to watch as jet fighters, helicopter gunships, robot tanks, lasers, and the like.

THE SCREEN

One can only dimly guess how Robert Wise's new film, *The Hindenburg*, might have been inspired, but one imagines, looking at the result, that the muse Clio was working overtime. . . .

Scene: Dawn, the back lot at Universal City. A studio executive who has been up all night whacking his brain for ways to save the industry stumbles out of the mist trailing clouds of glory. Emerging from the gloom he strikes us as a subtle yet peculiarly powerful combination of Mel Brooks and Mickey Rooney, a 2000-year old Andy Hardy.

"Vass diss?" he says, surveying a great steel tower that has fallen on its side. "Ohm yeah, now I'm remembuh. Diss vass from dat zions-fiction picture—vut d'you call—*Der Androgynous Shtrain.* Diss vass der one vass made dere a few years 'go by dat Rupert Veiss fellah. Vass gonna be a big grocer, dat film. Vass a *nuttin'*: vass shtrictly secon' runt. Lemme zee, vass dat der picture? . . . . Yeah, dat vass der one where vee hat to hab diss vershtumpenuh tower dat vass gonna be der whole 'Proyect Vildfire,' der whole plotz vhere der zionists bring her bad bacterias and bugs and tings to have a look-see at 'em. Vass all s'posed to stimulate like it vass untergrount. Nine stories, dat ting, and vut a bagel it cost us to build. Ohm boy. Now look at it. Vut a mess. Looks like some wreck of her Hintenbuog or sumptin' lyin' dere.

[dramatic pause]

"Vait a minute here. VAIT a minute! Vat iss I'm saying. Zat's it, ZAT'S IT! Vill make an film about der Hintenbuog. Vee got der whole zett lyin' right here in der backyard. Vill just put an couple of cleaner's bags on her outside, and will paint 'er silver, and will hire back dat Rupert Veiss fellah, and will call der film . . . lemme zee, lemme zee . . . YEAH! ZAT'S IT: Zeppelin of Fools."

Of course, it's not unusual in Hollywood for some million-dollar thing of the future to fall over on a deserted back lot and instantaneously become a thing of the past. It's only unusual for the thing it becomes to be anything as specific as the Hinderburg. It's as if Wise has resurrected his set for *Andromeda Strain* and made it ascend into the heavens like a dirigible Christ risen from the dead. Whether this is so or not, however, Wise has certainly found in a zeppelin the perfect vehicle for his kind of filmmaking. "Why, the Hindenburg is a flying dinosaur," objects Col. Ritter (George C. Scott) when he's made the great zeppelin's security officer. I couldn't have put the matter more succinctly myself.

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For what is a zeppelin, after all? It is what a whole staff of engineers would do if commissioned to design a child's balloon. It is a child's balloon blown up all out of proportion. It is an experiment proving beyond all doubt that a molehill can be made into a mountain. A zeppelin is the restrictively simple made ludicrously complex—a labyrinth of girders built to imprison a puff of hot air. It is the lever that could lift the world operated from the short side of its fulcrum. It is minimal grace achieved with maximum clumsiness, a habitation where, if this film is authentic, anyway, men climb up metal staircases to live in canvas rooms. A zeppelin is something enormous, yet tenuous. The more enormous it is, in fact, the more tenuous it becomes. It is tons of steel superstructure holding up the lightest, sheerest skin imaginable—a skin which itself holds in a gas that's even lighter still, a gas lighter than air. A zeppelin is a Juggernaught. It is a vessel built by diminishment rather than development, built to contain more of less. It is something that's massively evanescent. It's a big bag of noxious wind, which brings us back to the subject of Robert Wise again.

The piffle of plot that Wise has tried to envelop in the Hindenburg's story is supposed to be an explanation for why the great zeppelin exploded and burned. The answer, framed with an eye on the present-day audience rather than the historical question, is political terrorism. How terribly *au courant*. The only trouble with this quick piece of historical strip mining is that it leaves Wise and his three scriptwriters a bit uncertain how to deal with their characters. On the one hand, the historical issue is clear: the Hindenburg was the property and propaganda of the Nazis, who are history's villains. On the other hand, though, the present-day issue is equally clear: political terrorists who blow up airplanes and kill innocent people are villains too. Ugh, there seems to be two sets of bad guys here and no good guys—not very shmart planning, fellahs.

Perhaps this explains why the characters in this film have such rubbery relationships with each other. For example, when the Countess (Anne Bancroft) has trouble in customs and asks Col. Ritter's assistance, he instead treats her with the utmost suspicion and has her luggage double checked. Well, one might expect the fur to fly between a stiffnecked Prussian militarist and a decadent aristocrat. But in their next scene together, inexplicably, they appear to be old friends dripping nostalgia for the Germany that will never be again.

Thus Ritter, who has by his own account recently returned from bombing Guernica, turns out to be a pretty good chap. Beneath that Iron Cross he's been awarded in the first scene there beats a heart of gold. (As *The Sound of Music* shows, Wise always has had mixed feelings about Nazis.) The real confusion comes when Ritter's nemesis, Boerth (William Atherton), an anti-Nazi member of the Hindenburg's crew bent on sabotage, is just as wishy-washy as Ritter. Essentially Wise has tried to solve the problem of having all villains and no heroes by just pretending half the time that he's got all heroes and no villains. He deals with the historical circumstances and moral characters of these people in his films the same way a zeppelin deals with the laws of physics: by ignoring them.

In the end Ritter and Boerth neatly erase each other from history. They cancel each other out when the Hindenburg does indeed blow up, but does so in such a way that the whole world thinks it was an accident. I suppose that what Wise is trying to pull off is obvious enough. Interspersed with the human drama aboard the zeppelin in Wise's film, there are many shots of the Hindenburg gliding on through space, lumbering soundlessly by like a tree falling in Bishop Berkeley's forest when there's no one there to hear it. From these exterior shots Wise seems to hope we'll get a feeling that what's going on inside the Hindenburg is something suspended in time, a drama clinging to an explosive, transitory moment in history the way the passengers' compartment clings to the soft underbelly of the Hindenburg itself.

As the zeppelin hangs in air half way between two continents, we are intended to get the sense of people torn between two worlds, one dead, the other powerless to be born. They are Ritter's world and Boerth's, and the O-O tie in which their conflict ends is supposed to be a sign to us. Presumably we are to pick up this sense of things just by rubbing up against the film's stars and special effects the way the Hindenburg rubs up against a cloud and picks up St. Elmo's fire in its lightning rods. But unfortunately Wise's directing doesn't have the electricity in it to give us the charge he wants. His characters and plot are mere wisps trapped inside the Hindenburg's vacuous interior, fly specks on the vast, blank blimp of history.

COLIN L. WESTERBECK, JR.

SR. MAURA, S.S.N.D.

BEFORE THE FALL OF RAIN

The car cries. A young goat
whimpers for a human step
beside his own gavotte.
Magnolias stretch umbrella
leaves; a toadstool changes
to an ikon in the sagging air.

Under shrubs of box,
stone and root—like hedge—
schoolmasters—hoarsely whisper:
hope is a blind bard.
Take him in.

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THE EDITH WHARTON AFFAIR

SAUL MALOFF

Edith Wharton: A Biography

R.W.B. LEWIS

Harper & Row, $15

Without the unexpected discovery of the "Fullerton Papers," which establish in breathless detail the history of Edith Wharton's adulterous affair with Morton Fullerton, the novelist's biographer would have found it hard if not impossible to impose anything like significant dramatic form or compelling narrative rhythm on the flow and stutter of her life. "Definitive" is hardly the word for R.W.B. Lewis's exhaustive biography; with exclusive access to the huge documentary deposits in the Yale University's Beinecke Library (some fifty thousand items of all sorts) as well as everything else bearing on her life, the problem was survival, the danger drowning.

As it is, the book is heavily burdened by sheer sodden quotidian data: when Mrs. Wharton wasn't writing, and she wrote immensely, she traveled—for her, crossing the Atlantic seemed simpler, and certainly more attractive, than crossing the Hudson, some sixty return crossings, and that doesn't begin to touch her incessant travels in Europe and elsewhere. And when she wasn't traveling and touring, she was visiting and receiving, dining-out and giving luncheons and dinners. Her turbulent comings and goings are set down dizzyingly, sometimes—often—for no better reason than the facts are there to be recorded—notoriously, the besetting vice and lamentable definition of "definitive" lives. As Mrs. Wharton was appallingly energetic, Lewis's pages seethe and churn with activity; as she knew "everyone," they swell and sag with names, seeming at times a guest-list to a dazzling banquet in literary history's largest ballroom. Not quite everyone: though she sat at table with Yeats, awe overcame her and they spoke not; though her "circle" and Proust's overlapped, they never met; nor did she meet Joyce—his Paris and hers were in different countries and in a state of permanent war; nor Hemingway—nor Gertrude Stein and *her* circle. She knew Henry James, of course, and Bernard Berenson, and their circles; and everyone else. When she completed her morning's work, she turned toward the world, each a crowded life, the two taken together a hectic, overflowing one. But a life however hectic does not necessarily constitute a Life: so many pages written, an unending flow of titles, stories, novels, sundry other writings, people seen, dear friends, gardens tended, royalties received, checks signed: Edith Wharton's life, packed though it was, always seemed incomplete, a novel rising toward and falling away from an essential element which wasn't there. Now it is there, the essential element; or what seems, in the conventional view, to be that.

Before Morton Fullerton was discovered, the central dramatic episode was the collapse of her marriage to Teddy Wharton, who married the fashionable Jones girl of good "old New York" family only to learn to his bewilderment that the nice, thoroughly acceptable, modestly rich, socially certified Edith Newbold Jones who always had been different from other girls of her class and place (places: New York and Newport) in that she read books and thought long thoughts and occupied herself with scribbling things—that that girl, instead of developing decently into a society matron, developed into Edith Wharton. Teddy himself was an affable bumbler, ineffectual, supported by an allowance from his mother, given to riding, hunting, fishing, mad for cars, indifferent to art, bored and bewildered by ideas about anything; and later in life quite mad. Knowing Teddy, knowing Edith, James described the marriage, as only James could, as "an almost—or rather an utterly inconceivable thing."

Yet divorce was unthinkable; no Jones, no Newbold had ever been divorced—people of their class and time regarded that too an inconceivable thing, the ultimate scandal. The peculiar circumstances of their marriage, "incompatibility" aside, would not have mattered to the guardians and adjudicators of manners and morals of the institution: the marriage had not been consummated until three weeks after the exchange of vows, and the evidence appears convincing that there had not been a second time. She had her writing and friends and travel; he had trout, foxes, expensive newfangled cars, and even, in a late blooming of wild oats, girls—what is worse, whom he recklessly flaunted. The erosion of the marriage, Teddy's decay and intermittent madness, the divorce: these elements, until now, had been pressed into service as the dramatic apex in the narrative of her life.

The received version: growing up in the Gilded Age of post-Civil War America, enduring the progressive alienation of becoming a serious writer in an essentially philistine provincial society that scarcely tolerated it of its men much less its women, her gradual then permanent retreat from—renunciation of—America and choice of the expatriate life—Paris and the great world of

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SAUL MALOFF's *most recently published novel is* Heartland *(Scribner's).*

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the Faubourg St. Germain. And always her friends, the "happy few," the society of devoted, cultivated men and women. Desmond MacCarthy would say of her that she cared too much for luxury and the company of agreeable and undemanding friends. There was that side of Edith Wharton, the grande dame, superior to her class but very much a creature of it; and there was the eminent writer. She seemed altogether knowable and therefore as a subject for biography not very interesting—or no more interesting than her characters; but not the sort of figure who resists the biographical imagination. Now we have Morton Fullerton and a passionate affair of the heart in her middle age.

What are we to make of this—in the context of her life, or, for that matter, of any life? For Lewis, it was a boon, the great unlooked-for, unexpected gift from the skies, the narrative and dramatic center without which the life would all ebb and flow, like most lives, even Edith Wharton's, a progression of days and ways: Edith Wharton in the morning, Mrs. Wharton or Edith in the afternoon and evening: touring the Italian countryside with Berenson, visiting churches and galleries, swooping down like an eagle on the quaking Henry James to gather him up for a motor-car tour, taking tea with her friends, dining at some grand table. Without Fullerton, R.W.B. Lewis would have sunk in seas of material, in the *matter* of a bustling life; even with Fullerton, he gets very damp, soggy, telling us, as he does, what Edith Jones wore at her wedding but of the "Clivedon set" only that it was the "gadfly of Parliaments," and passing over her mindless, benighted, class-bound social and political views and attitudes with the lightest of brushes; recording inconsequential meetings with, among a multitude of others, Santayana, Moravia, Malinowsky merely because the archives reveal that the encounters took place and therefore must be recorded as if by force of contractual obligation. She consumed worlds, James said, "eating up one for her luncheon and one for her dinner" and left the company of her friends "ground to powder, reduced to pulp, consumed utterly." And now in the midst of this maelstrom that has always been our impression of life, we have a set-piece of a most surprising and disconcerting kind: Edith transported, Edith in love, rapture, the grand passion.

Not long out of Harvard, Morton Fullerton had become a disciple and friend of Henry James, and it was James who years later introduced him to Edith Wharton. By then, he was Paris correspondent for the London *Times*, and later a correspondent for *Le Figaro*, like her an expatriate, and like her he remained one all his life. Something of a bounder, he was the sort of man who, acting out of neurotic compulsions, seems to possess a fatal gift for ensnarling his life, and that of others, in emotional and sexual complication. As a character, he is not without interest (in fact a full-scale biography of him is in the making); but he doesn't concern us here except in his role of Edith Wharton's only lover, as the man who told an earlier biographer: "Please seize the event, however delicate the problem, to dispel the myth of your heroine's frigidity."

Marriage was never a possibility, even if they had been "free"; was never considered; was unthinkable; would have been another of James's inconceivable things. It was an affair, by no means the only one Fullerton was conducting throughout its duration (1906-09); and it was an affair for her as well, a storm after a long drought. When it ended, it was over; indeed it didn't so much end as run out, die of inanition. No great cataclysm; rather a redirection of energy. It ended as it is in the nature of these things to end. When its quantum of energy was exhausted, it was over. Fullerton reappears on the crowded scene that was her life; but he was then simply an old friend, and seemingly scarcely even that. She asked to be buried in the Protestant Cemetery in Paris near her older and dearer friend Walter Berry; and there she lies.

Throughout the course of the affair, she not only lived it, she wrote it—turned it into writing, as if thereby to make it real and durable, usable as experience, as material for literature. Bad literature: the verses that record states of feeling gush and strike attitudes, catch their breath, turn and posture; and the Journal notes are of a kind. They are romantic in the bad sense, just as at her worst Edith Wharton so often wrote the kind of trash once designated by the term "ladies' magazine fiction." Overwhelmed by the experience, she experienced it as . . . an overwhelming experience; and as herself, a woman of extraordinary sensibility and intelligence, experiencing it: in short, as "experience." After all, it was only an affair; affairs, contrary to legend, don't move mountains and neither do they change lives, at any rate lives that have already congealed. In 1906 Edith Wharton, already a celebrated writer, was approaching her forty-fifth birthday. After one of Fullerton's visits to her bed, she saluted a "new life:" "Qui comincia la vita nuova;" and after a visit that went less well she lamented those "two sad hours:" "zwei traurige Stunden." In ecstasy and sorrow both, she was nothing if not a gifted linguist; and no matter how powerful the emotion sweeping her she was a writer, self-regarding, an observer of her own turbulences, scrutinizing her feelings in several languages, making phrases of them. Fullerton, one feels, just happened to be there.

What is a biographer to do when he stumbles upon such archives? They will clamor for elevation to the status of Eriksonian "Event," the key, the dramatic turning-point—the heretofore missing element which unravels the mystery. Convention, of course, abundantly, urgently supports this illusion: the *idea* of romantic love, the sexual determinant, the grand passion, is so deeply embedded in our ways of thinking and feeling, that without it we are adrift, quite at a loss to come to terms with our subject, with the dross of a lifetime. But what if it's not The Event, but only an event among others, another episode in the ongoing sequence? An impious notion that goes against

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the grain; but in fact the tides of Edith Wharton's life engulfed it, swept over it, buried or absorbed it. She was no heroine of melodrama, and when she tried the role she proved no better at it than might be expected. It ill became her: she was hardheaded, willful, resourceful, intimidating. Pining would have been sordid, silly, a form of sentimentality she would have despised, in life as in art. It was over; she had other things to do, like writing.

To make capital of it Lewis is bound to show its effect upon subsequent writing, else the discovery loses some—much—of its value. He makes the effort, but the case is flimsy, at best inconclusive. *Post hoc, ergo propter hoc.* In her best work she remained what she had been, an uncommonly fine novelist of manners. We are in no need of such hypotheses; there's nothing in the work that can't be readily accounted for by the usual accretion in time of observation and experience. Dining out was experience; looking back was experience.

Lewis gives short shrift to the persistent rumor of her "illegitimate" birth (the putative father her older brother's British tutor)—a rumor originating, no doubt, in the inability of her class to account for the appearance of a major writer in its midst by the customory routes; but Lewis errs in a kindred way by summoning to his aid a rather spectral father, the actual one, who once tried his hand at some verses and was known to have read some books. Why this should be necessary in the first place is not explained.

Nor are we much edified (however delighted or startled or alarmed we may be) by the volume's other "sensational" disclosure—that Edith Wharton wrote a fragment of out-and-out pornography and the scenario of the never-written work of which it was to be a part. Mrs. Wharton. Edith Wharton! Well, why not Edith Wharton? Her modest attempt at the genre, after all, places her in the most admirable company of major writers and artists. Certainly, she had read pornography; probably she'd read that classic of pornography *Gamiani,* Alfred de Musset's tribute to her greatly admired Georges Sand; her own fragment, "Beatrice Palmato," can bear comparison with the best work of its kind (though we can be grateful, I think, that she never completed the projected work). The fragment, a primal scene between the heroine and her father, is perfectly executed, fit and meet in every detail, each stroke of the pen beautifully measured. Yet exaggerated claims, literary or psychological, must be guarded against. Pornography, however finely done, is still pornography; and this example, too, is not art but craft, not literature but writing, an exercise in writing, an immensely gifted writer who thought Joyce had got it all wrong, showing how it should be done. The fragment is essentially Gothic in conception, the repressed underside of Gothic, even to the name of the heroine, and the depiction of the exotic father. Incest, of course, confers a special piquancy. To claim more than this is to trespass in the mined salient that separates art from life, and to circle endlessly in the uncharted darkness.

"What is the essence of a life," Leon Edel, thinking of James, asked in his *Literary Biography,* "and how do we disengage that essence from the eternal clutter of days and years, the inexorable tick of the clock—and yet restore the sense of that very tick?" The trouble with Lewis's as with so many definitive biographies is that essences, whatever they may be, are so entangled with the eternal clutter of days and years that we cannot see one for the other. Perhaps essence is the clutter, clutter the essence; perhaps the quest for essence is a sentimental convention, a dramatic device that does deep violence to the truth of human life. Perhaps it is to put the question falsely, or to put the wrong question. What we then call essence may be nothing other than the necessary lie art tells as a means of penetrating mystery and creating illusions of truth, at its best creating an overpowering sense of truth, and even new truths. But by the same token, an "essence" maladroitly selected from the welter of experience, even—or rather especially—the "essence" which most commands our attention and seems most to answer our needs, will compound the clutter while illuminating nothing.

RON OVERTON

AUTUMN NEWS

The walnuts have dropped
to blacken & sulk
in the stiff October grass;
the thorns are falling asleep.
Bright bees are reported
sacking the last of the grapes today.
The maple's leaves
have abandoned their calm colors,
they're beginning to riot
in yellow & red.
They are expected to fall.
And the kingly white sun
has gone down in a different way,
leaving a zone of cold
around the house.
Night, and a breeze
cleans your eyes awake:
the silver circus of stars
performs overhead! Today,
the news is old.

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THE WRONG SIDE OF THE WALL

JOHN DRUSKA

Jails

RONALD GOLDFARB

Anchor Press/Doubleday, $9.95

Slammer

BEN GREER

Atheneum, $8.95

Let me confess to possessing no more than minimal credentials for judging the veracity of any work, fiction or non, that purports to deal with penal institutions. I can think of only three reasons that might allow me to comment on another's view of prisons or jails. I have grown up, and lived for the majority of my life to date, just three blocks from Cook County Jail, close enough to have heard the warning siren and seen police officers, bearing high-powered rifles, patrolling our alleys for fresh escapees. I even went to the Jail a day after one of its venerable walls collapsed of its own accord, and tried to film the historic ruin. An impromptu guard, posed with one foot up on a wooden chair set amid the rubble, activated himself long enough to shoo me away on this occasion. That's the closest I've come to the wrong side of the walls. Secondly, while home sick from grammar school, I was sent via messenger a tome on the history of Sing-Sing, as some librarian's joke in response to my request for a good book. I read the work avidly, to defy her at first, out of fascination soon after. To my misfortune now, however, I remember nothing of it. Lastly, I've taught in a couple of Jesuit high schools. I go so far as to count some of their prisoners among my friends.

The faults of *Slammer* and the virtues of *Jails*, though, have so much less to do with their subjects than they do with the literary approach each of their authors takes to his subject, that I don't feel at all presumptuous in rendering the following verdict: *Slammer* is a broad-stroke Hollywood-bound-type failure of a novel; and *Jails* is a superb compendium of research into "the ultimate ghetto of the criminal justice system" that yields an argument humane enough to virtually assure its rejection by the American public.

Slammer's stocked with star roles: the old-Church jock-chaplain Breen and his new-breed antagonist, the fellow-cleric White; the erstwhile Black redeemer Moultrie and his foe the junkie Muslim; the neophyte cellblock queen so aptly named Childs; the author himself, Ben Greer (a "born writer" who "became a prison guard to write this novel"), posing as the rookie guard Walsh; Darcy, the grisly ice-pick wielding enforcer, Angel of Death to his brother convicts. Given such a contentious cast, the novel's made to reek with the sense of doom gathering about the Southern prison these actors inhabit. Cataclysm comes on schedule, as per formula and finger-wagging foreshadowing; it's a riot, complete with mutilations, hostages, police sniping, and a comeback appearance by the once-fazed Breen that matches up to any prison padre's eleventh-hour conquest ever captured on grade-B celluloid. Another age of silver-screen mutants might regard it as cause for his beatification.

I've no doubt that characters at least similar to these exist in prison society, even as they do in our extra-mural world. But the problem here, as in any other pulp novel (*Jaws*, for example), grows from the way the characters are, first, assembled, then manipulated simply for the boffo effect of the actions contrived for them to perform. The characters in this kind of work exist as grotesques, each an exaggerated figure who's never allowed, through the anomalies of his quirks and everyday events, to assume real dimensions, to lend actions the credibility of his *felt* inclinations, to earn sympathy or distaste.

Slammer, like so many other aspiring bestsellers, popular films, and TV shows, toys with our sympathies as they are directed toward people. Perhaps that's because we're so seldom allowed in these works to perceive characters as they *are*, inner and outer. Surely it's because pulp melodrama makes unconscionable demands on its characters and its audience. Characters often appear so changeable in these works, or rather we're required to react to them as being so variously *usable* because conclusions—of actions and/or of pop moral lessons—compel certain behaviors at certain times, whether or not these jibe completely with what we've come to know of the characters. I'm thinking of a recent *Streets of San Francisco* episode in which an unemployed mad professor kidnaps former students and chains them to desks in an abandoned school. After his convenient death the show's detective-heroes eulogize the man, making him out to be a victim of the changes in modern education. As is so often the case in TV shows of this type or in outlandish films like *Freebie and the Bean*, we're asked to suspend the subtleties of moral judgment for the sake of events that come off like formulaic salvos of law-and-order rhetoric. Maybe it's all okay as pulp, as escape. But how much of the modern audience has limited itself to pulp, accepts pulp as its version of reality, and uses the gross simplicities of pulp morality to codify its own experience?

Why not accept *Slammer* as entertaining pulp and its characters as pulp stereotypes? *Slammer*, like so much else of our modern pulp (as vs. old westerns, horror stories, etc.), simply isn't entertaining because, I think, it aspires to be more than pulp. It pretends to deal with modern problems,

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invites us to some revelation about them; and to discount its characters as stereotypes is to do this sort of work a favor. Since Slammer asks us to respond to these characters as more than common signals, at least as being fraught with special symbolic intent, we need to see through this deception, to accuse Greer of a basic misuse of character, rather than allowing him a backslide into stereotype.

That modern audience of pulp, dulled beyond such distinctions, is likely to find *Slammer* entertaining, maybe even important. How wonderfully the sinful, narrow-minded Breen ascends to his heroism. We're expected to *side* with these hoked-up heroics (how I'd like to see Breen as the fool cleric in *War of the Worlds*!) and rejoice in his subsequent mellowing, while Greer ties up a few loose ends (dispensing with characters, etc.) and lets the complexities of prison life, once so graphically described, fade from the scene.

Slammer attests to its own hypocrisy: it doesn't care a turd for the prison conditions Greer portrays or the people who create them. It's using them as ornament, part of our modern violence-deco. In the end all that matters in this novel is the cliché of action winding up to a climax, the inevitable sorting out of fates. Whatever we've seen of the characters' private lives—and Greer's narrative shifts do give us the internal glimpses, however gratuitous at times, of several of them—is rendered trivial after all, literary window-dressing. After the lots have been cast, we've learned nothing of these men; their lives have been played out as a media event, its circumstances imposed by a very insistent director.

Slammer's strutting and fretting is so transparent, it's no wonder the book and its author have been propped up by what's come to be the usual mereticious array of jacket blurbs. Here's good old James Dickey leading the pack of Greer's admirers with such bombast as: "diamond-hard breathtaking focus." The comments range all the way down to Miller Williams' "one of those rare novels I'm going to tell my friends about." God only knows what Williams will tell them, but in the case of the others, whose praise is more effusive and direct, I can't for the life of me understand what cause Greer has given them for celebration. Least of all those frequent Hemingwayesque flourishes that underscore his posing: "But guns were for killing and he was not, and it bothered him that the stock felt good in his hands."

Jails, on the other hand, is not only not about prisons, but it's an honorable book. From the start Ronald Goldfarb distinguishes that "(a) prison houses convicted criminals . . . A jail is essentially a pretrial detention center used to hold people until they are tried. But to complicate matters, the jail also has come to be used both as a short-term correctional institution for misdemeanants, and a way station for a random mélange of other defendants." Goldfarb documents conditions at jails that are worse, he claims, than those in most prisons; and he specifies misuses of jails that he sees as stemming from the Jacksonian era, when "institutionalization became the 'preferred solution to the problems of poverty, crime, delinquency and insanity.'" Chapter by detailed chapter Goldfarb meticulously reveals how jails in our day consequently run according to biases against the sick, narcotics addicts, alcoholics, and juveniles—especially against the poor in all these categories.

> *The aristocratic legislators and magistrates of the young republic assumed the leadership of the organized temperance movement; they also reacted forcefully to the presence of the public inebriate. They enforced existing statutes prohibiting drunkenness with new vigor. Drunkards were punished under the harsher provisions of acts against vagrancy and vagabondage. And new statutory drunkenness law, much of it still in force today, had its origins in these last decades of the eighteenth century, as the "responsible" classes took steps against the intemperance of their charges. The modern criminal justice system in the United States is their direct heir.* —Jails

Goldfarb's complaints vary from his indictment of inequities in the bail system, a subject he's dealt with at length before (*Ransom: A Critique of the American Bail System*), to his broader attack on jails as "negative institution(s)." Jails, Goldfarb believes, ought to become, or be replaced by, positive institutions that will "channel people away from troubled punitive conditions into treatment-oriented corrective programs." Perhaps, then, distinctions like that between the "sport" and the "bum," the rich drunk who's winked at and the poor one who's arrested, will cease creating easy outs for a society of self-righteous jailers which needs a dumping ground for its misfits, no questions asked.

The crux of Goldfarb's argument against jails as they now exist is his contention that "All total institutions —particularly penal institutions and most particularly jails—may be said to be run for the convenience and benefit of the staff and administrators, rather than the welfare of the inmates."

No doubt a hearty minority of our people would share in the criticism offered by that statement, insofar as it applies to schools—after all the gist of the last few decades' best works on education suggests that schools should adjust radically to their clients' needs. But how many will go as far as Goldfarb does, and argue that *jails* (a term loaded with the bad connotations of bicentennial frontier rhetoric) ought to adjust to their clients as well? Goldfarb's premise is so simple and apparently truthful—the clients of jails aren't in most cases, criminals, and in other cases aren't *confirmed* criminals —that it's surely beyond the understanding of most Americans, caught as they are in their pulp rhetoric of self-justification, law-and-order, and so on. Here, in Indianapolis, a high-ranking cop publicly wonders whether the

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BRANDS OF CHRISTIANITY

JOHN GARVEY

Alan Collins; Guildford Cathedral

Angela Davis and Henry Kissinger have something in common. Both get embarrassed, defensive, or evasive when anyone is so gauche as to mention the Soviet persecution of Jews, faithful Christians, and people who think. Free Angela, remember? But *free* becomes a very slippery word in this company. Maybe the world is ready for Orwell at last—not so much the Orwell of *1984* and *Animal Farm*, as good as those books are, but the Orwell of the essays and book reviews, the decent socialist who was outraged at lies, the denial of the simplest and most important forms of freedom, and the corruption of language which is the necessary tool of the modern state. Read Orwell on Stalinism and English liberal academics who tried to make murder and deceit sound like the social equivalents of minor surgery.

There are still some incredible people whose response to Soviet or Maoist totalitarianism is to act as if it were all something "they" are prone to culturally, or are willing to accept, culturally; those who try to escape are apparently culturally aberrant. Some of the same people who object to the prosecution of a skin magazine find it forgivable that a poet who doesn't sing the praises of Caesar is jailed, or if not forgivable it is at least something to be washed away in the great progress the state has made in, say, popular education —even though what people get to read once they learn how will be prose-by-the-yard turned out by government hacks. In the *New York Times* you read that the Buddhist faith has been completely stamped out in Tibet, because it was considered decadent by the government—it doesn't matter that 90 percent of the people believed and practiced it—and in the same issue North Korea's Kim Il Sung takes out a full page ad which is full of the kind of prose you can expect from bureaucrats who have put their minds on automatic pilot, the North Korean equivalents of the men who gave us "protective reaction strike" and "inoperative."

Thomas Merton used as an epigraph to one of his books a quotation from Gabriel Marcel: "Today the first and perhaps the only duty of the philosopher is to defend man against himself: to defend man against that extraordinary temptation toward inhumanity to which—almost without being aware of it—so many human beings today have yielded." Of course this temptation is not confined to Communist countries alone. In South Korea the Catholic poet Kim Chi Ha has written about a dictator enraged by people whose "fearlessness comes from that cursed Jesus." For this and other equally dangerous words he is in prison, in danger of death. In *American Poetry Review* Denise Levertov called him "a Christian of that essential kind that sees in the gospel a powerful revolutionary message" and in that sense President Park has been right to see in him a threat, just as the Soviet government has been right to see a threat in Solzhenitsyn, the dissident Orthodox and Baptists, the Jews, all those whose lives proclaim that man does not live by state-certified bread alone.

I don't think too many people would argue that Solzhenitsyn more than any one person has helped to clarify these things for us. There has been a recent flurry of books and articles which indicate a new consciousness, and some of them rode in on the wave of Solzhenitsyn's success. *Alexander Dolgun's Story—an American in the Gulag* (Knopf, $10.00) is one; another is *Sanya: My Life with Alexander Solzhenitsyn* (Bobbs Merrill, $8.95), by Natalya Reshtovskaya, Solzhenitsyn's embittered first wife. The reviews of Cardinal Mindzenty's memoirs were surprisingly sympathetic, and not too long ago the late Lionel Trilling dared to write sympathetically of Whittaker Chambers in *The New York Review of Books.*

Is this just a matter of anti-Communism becoming respectable again? It could look that way—a lot of the people who have defended Solzhenitsyn look the other way when President Park imprisons his dissidents—but something else is going on and only a few people have noticed it. In *Commonweal* John Lukacs' recent article spoke of Solzhenitsyn's prophetic importance to the West, and in the *New Yorker* George Steiner pointed out the difference between Solzhenitsyn's view of freedom and that of the liberal West: where the West has come to equate freedom with the right to choose between all possible alternatives, for Solzhenitsyn and other Russian Orthodox thinkers there is no real freedom outside of Christ and the kingdom proclaimed by Jesus. Interviewers who have tried to understand Solzhenitsyn without approaching his Christianity have missed the point. Granted that some

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of his comments on American politics go down the wrong way (his criticism of Ellsberg, for example, did not contain any hint of a realization that deliberate lying had become government policy; and his statements about Vietnam have been odd—the U.S. defeat was a bad thing, he told Barbara Walters, and yet he would not say, and thank God he didn't, that the U.S. should have used any means to win)—granted this, he still cannot be dismissed as some have dismissed him, as a left-over from the cold war, a naive slavophile, an authoritarian anti-democrat.

The difficulty is not between left and right. It is between Solzhenitsyn's brand of Christianity and the more frivolous sort we have become used to in the West, the religion of million-dollar churches and theology schools, youth rallies and prayer breakfasts. The Russian Church looks strange and scary from here, and so we dismiss it as a weird form of nationalism. But it is deeper and much more complicated than that. We can begin to see Solzhenitsyn better if we see him not as an isolated prophet but as a spokesman for a persecuted prophetic community, and we can begin to understand that community by looking at *From Under the Rubble* (Little, Brown, $8.95), an anthology edited by Solzhenitsyn, written by people who are suffering for their independence and their Christianity. There is an intensity to some of the essays in this book which we are used to seeing in very few writers—Berdayev, maybe, and in the West Pascal or Bernanos. "Before I have even crossed the threshold of the Church, I hold her responsible for a child's tears, not taking the trouble to consider that, outside the Church, I will never find a meaning for those tortured tears, and so will not even be able to wipe them away. I refuse to believe that my moralism, my thirst for 'justice,' my dream of founding a heaven on earth, has already resulted in our present-day ocean of tears. . ." So writes the pseudonymous F. Korsakov, in "Russian Destinies," one of the essays in the book. This isn't czarist nostalgia. Evgeny Barabanov's "The Schism Between the Church and the World" makes it clear in the most powerful and Christian terms that the Church has betrayed its mission throughout the world, not only in Russia. It is a criticism of Christians for having accepted the world's definition of religion, a call to abandon false traditions and to assume the daring proper to Christians. It is as revolutionary as the Fathers of the Church, and as new as the gospels.

Everyone who wonders about the relevance of Christianity to the modern world should read this staggering book. The essays were written for Russian readers—there is, for example, a good criticism of Sakharov by Solzhenitsyn—but if some of it gets *too* Russian for you, skim it and read on. There are things here we need to be reminded of. "We seem to have forgotten that we have been entrusted with the great task of transforming the world," writes Barabanov. "We must speak of what is beyond modernism and conservatism alike, of what is eternally living and absolute in this world of the relative, of what is simultaneously both eternally old and eternally young. . . It must mean not only a breakthrough into eternity, but the presence of eternity in our own time. . . Christian activism must lead not to a reformation but to a transformation of Christian consciousness and life, and through it to a transformation of the world. Only when we have entered upon this path shall we be able to answer the challenge of godlessness. . . Only then shall we be able to answer the call of those who are close to the Light, but who are prevented from communing with it by our own negligence and inertia."

THE CLOSER YOU LOOK AT U.M.P. THE BETTER WE LOOK!

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police need to assume the one-time "educator's" role of using corporal punishment to discipline juveniles; and the business editor of the *News*, under the headline "Is Prison Solution to Crime?" (Oct. 8, 1975), reports on a women's crime-fighting corps dedicated to "keeping tabs on judges and courts to assure that as few as possible criminals are set loose to maim, rape, slay and rob." How many readers of the Indianapolis *News*, or your news, will stop to question the legality of the cop's fantasy or to distinguish, amid the anti-crime railing, between prisons and jails, and appreciate the special problems of the latter? (Even the Library of Congress catalogue card for *Jails* lists its contents as: "1.Prisons—United States . . .")

Anyone who reads Goldfarb's book carefully must do so. The sheer weight of the facts he assembles compels us to share in his passion for jail reform. The facts are so overwhelming, the proofs so extended, that at times they almost become boring. I began to wonder every so often, while reading *Jails*, whether a pared-down, stylized argument, supported by minimal but convincing evidence, might not work better for Goldfarb, perhaps even reach a popular audience. But only in rare instances did the book actually drag under the weight of its language, seem to circle back and repeat itself needlessly, or lapse into the kind of minor redundancy apparent in the quote on *Jails* as pretrial detention centers cited above. Instead, each time Goldfarb achieved another discovery about jails, it became clearer that the nature of his argument required a categorical amassing of facts, all of them. And each discovery made me anticipate further documentation toward yet another discovery; each one made it matter less that Goldfarb isn't a master of prose style. *Jails* elicited from me a sympathy with the material and the ordering, and so the conclusions, of Goldfarb's probe. I came to feel that only the cumulative power of his data could allow him his quixotic role, ratify it, and convince us of its sanity.

In light of my meager knowledge of penal life and literature, I can't absolutely vouch for the authority of Goldfarb's view. Could another work, as well documented, dispute his findings? Perhaps. But I have to doubt it. *Jails* forced me to trust Goldfarb's methods, and to assent to sharing his convictions. Its effects are *earned* as *Slammer*'s are not. Add to their generic differences this more crucial one: *Jails* is a flesh-and-blood work, *Slammer* is all flash and bluster. The first is non-fiction, the second a novel; but each in its own way ought to engage its audience in an experience that it makes credible, and through that experience in an act of what some might call revelation. *Jails* does; *Slammer*, for the most part, shows us its inadequacies.

How unfortunate that under the mass-media-mesmerized public gaze a Goldfarb is likely to regarded as a bleeding heart, and a Greer as a tough realist. Is it too much to ask that we leave the simplistic mechanics of *Slammer* or *The Streets of San Francisco*, and the equally mindless pap of a show like *On the Rocks*, in order to see ourselves, innocent all until proven guilty, as we are? At the worst, then, we might discern bars of guilt and blind prejudice that reveal us to be as much imprisoned by our inhumanity as Goldfarb's *Jails* contends. Would that be too harsh a verdict for us to sustain in this anniversary year of our release into freedom?

Thinking About God

JOHN MacQUARRIE

Harper & Row, $8.95

RICHARD P. McBRIEN

John Macquarrie, Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Oxford University, writes clearly and with intellectual balance, controlling all the while an impressively wide range of literature. He is decidedly existentialist in philosophical orientation, but open to, and indeed sympathetic with, other points of view. And his evaluation of current trends in the field of religious studies is always sober and realistic. He has never been sidetracked by a passing fad. Macquarrie's earlier *Principles of Christian Theology* (1966), although not without fault, remains perhaps the best one-volume systematic exposition of the Christian faith, still a practical text for seminary, university, and college courses.

Thinking About God, however, is not one of his stronger works. Each of the chapters originated for the most part as lectures, and several of the pieces appeared earlier in theological journals. There is some internal coherence nonetheless, because each of the essays has to do, in one way or another, with the problem of God: method, language, criteria for truth, grounds for belief, the relation of God with the world, and so forth. There are also seven chapters which discuss some representative—and not-so-representative—religious thinkers: Schleiermacher, Heidegger, and Bultmann are in the former category, to be sure.

Unfortunately, this is not the sort of collection I would readily recommend to anyone who already has some familiarity with Macquarrie's work. There is little here, as far as I can determine, which one could not find more fully developed in one of several other Macquarrie volumes—and he has written some substantial books indeed.

Each of these essays provides the reader with a generous taste of a particular issue or problem, but it is rarely more than a taste. The essays are schematic, as individual lectures necessarily have to be. No thesis is pursued to its conclusion. Macquarrie always indicates the direction of his own thought, but he never takes us all the way down the road to its end.

Thus, although he acknowledges again and again that God-language has to establish its warrants and criteria—its truth-claims, in other words—*Thinking About God* never supplies these for the reader. We are left instead with thematic statements without specific support: "Christians have assented to this given because of an inward testimony arising out of that self-knowledge which is part of our personal existence and which sees

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Christ as the fulfillment of man's inner testimony."

Furthermore, some of the topics treated have by now a dated flavor: specifically, the references to the defunct death-of-God movement. Elsewhere, timely subjects are addressed, but always in compressed and abbreviated fashion: mystery and truth, the meaning of "the Gospel," the problem of natural theology, creation and environment.

Those heretofore unfamiliar with the large and rich corpus of Macquarrie's writings should profit from several of the essays. Roman Catholics and not a few Missouri Synod Lutherans might usefully ponder his straightforward piece on heresy, for example.

The essay, "The Problem of God Today," is a good introduction both to "the problem" and to Macquarrie's approach to it. Here at least he broadly outlines an argument validating and grounding our God-talk: the existence of the world, of moral consciousness, of our quest for meaning, and so forth. And he is quick to remind us that "we live in an ambiguous world where no final proof, one way or the other, is available. . . ."

On the other hand, he is critical of those who insist there are no atheists, only people who think they're atheists. Such a view ("anonymous Christianity" and all that) "infringes the integrity of the man who professes himself an atheist, and does not permit genuine dialogue with him; for it says in effect that if he only understood himself as well as the Christian understands him, he would see that after all he is really a believer!"

"The most serious objection to such methods of debate," he concludes, "whether practised by Christians or atheists, is the logical one that terms become eroded and distinctions blurred."

Perhaps the most significant statement in this entire book is one that its author seems to make offhandedly: "We have to reckon with the possibility that after a long interval, the influence of Hegel may be coming back in theology." The fact is that Hegel is already the dominant philosophical figure in much contemporary theology and many people, even professional theologians, don't seem to realize it. Hegelianism is particularly strong in Karl Rahner and Hans Küng, and, on the Protestant side, in Moltmann and Pannenberg. Very soon, I should hope, we shall all be reading Hegel more assiduously than we consumed some of his less gifted interpreters and adapters.

This latest of John Macquarrie's books may not rank with the best of his earlier efforts, but a touch of high quality marks it nonetheless.

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 3)

be taxed. But the gift of the stock (and its future income) must be made in order to reduce the taxable amount. Would it be fair to tax the money given as though it had been kept?

Mr. Dutton objects to some escaping taxation. So do I. But consider the following. Assume a donor with $100,000 income per year regularly gives away $70,000 per year to his/her *alma mater*, to charities for the blind, to a private home for the retarded, to cancer research, and to a place of worship. The donor does this year after year and lives on the undonated portion of income ($30,000). The gifts are all tax deductible. I would ask Mr. Dutton whether as a matter of principle he believes that this donor who exercises charitable self-taxation at the 70 percent rate should nevertheless pay income tax on $100,000?

WILLIAM E. JOHNSTON, JR.

Reporting Back

Durham, N.C.

To the Editors: It is unquestionably true that many of us who went to Detroit as participant-observers, went with various and mixed emotions and expectations. However, in reading some of the "views from Detroit" as Mr. Aman's report was called, one must wonder where some of the "reporters" such as Mr. Aman, were, during the proceedings [Sept. 26].

All too much of what I have read reported in the various religious journals gives the impression that those who were there to "report," thought that instead of dialogue between persons with different responses to liberation theology, the conference was supposed to be an arena of competing theological positions. The "reporters" were there as score-keepers, umpires, and referees. (So Professor Gutierrez scored a "knock-down" by his absence on the first day, and a "knock-out" or "home-run" when he arrived. "And when he did arrive on Friday, his emotional identification with Blacks, Chicanos and women in the United States became symbolic of the liberation about which all were talking.")

Professor Aman is apparently from that school of religious journalism that feels it has the "religious" license to appeal to uninspired and non-creative imagination to provide the interest that it is feared honest reporting might not evince. I quote one simple example

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from Mr. Aman's "report."

"Significantly, the only attempt to draw up a genuine North American liberation theology ended in dismal failure. Frederick Herzog made a valiant attempt from the Protestant side, but his Barthian approach *could not match* the Latin Americans' more Marxian analyses for actual *contact* with liberation processes. The whole effort was received with reserve and even anger by Blacks, Chicanos, women, etc."

"Apparently," Mr. Aman continues, "one does liberation theology at his/her own risk; if one is going to describe the oppression of another, he/she had better get it right."

Perhaps Mr. Aman did not understand the process. Apparently success or failure was subjectively determined by the "reporter." In any event, however much the Marxian analysis of the Latin Americans accounted for their *actual contact* with the liberation processes, Mr. Aman's lack of contact with "Blacks, Chicanos, women," etc. (who were the etc.?), accounted for his assumption that the Blacks, at any rate, were angry with Professor Herzog.

It would appear, then, that when one is going to report the responses of others, one does so at his/her own risk. And, surely, when one is reporting in *Commonweal*, one ought to at least try to "get the story right." *Aman!*

JOSEPH B. BETHEA
Director of Black Church Studies

HERBERT O. EDWARDS
Associate Professor of Black Church Studies
Duke University

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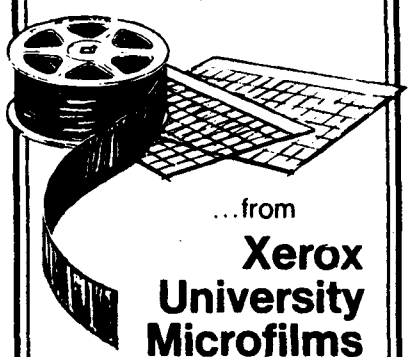

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Reply

I do not mind—too much—assuming the risks of reporting. But I wish Professors Bethea and Edwards had been more clear in the reasons for their anger. A good deal of the language is theirs, not mine. Expressions such as "knock-down" and "knock-out" do not appear in the original report. And why do they introduce terms such as "score-keepers" and "umpires"? The whole point of my report was that liberation theologies are emerging from different struggles, and that each is learning—painfully—to respect the other.

Which brings us to Frederick Herzog's presentation. (Beware of the single or "simple" example.) Is it the criticism of Bethea and Edwards that there was *not* a negative response such as I described? This is simply a matter of fact, but personally I have never witnessed a clearer sense of anger and dissatisfaction to a theological presentation. (Where *were* you, Professors Bethea and Edwards, on August 21?) My *interpretation* of the response was that it was not in fact Herzog's fault at all; that the task thrust upon him was just impossible. No North American theologian, Protestant or Catholic, could be expected to offer a single theology of liberation. A further interpretation was implied by my comment about the Marxian analyses. Our Latin American counterparts have an almost insurmountable advantage over white middle-class theologians (and academicians such as myself) in *understanding* liberation processes. That advantage, I believe, is rooted in their Marxian *praxis*.

KENNETH AMAN
Department of Philosophy and Religion
Montclair State College
Montclair, New Jersey

Polygamy

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: In "Reconsidering Polygamy" [Nov. 21] Eugene Hillman makes a provocative case for a more catholic approach to defining ideal marriage. And I heartily agree that Westernized values and attitudes should never be used as moral yardsticks to measure civilization expressed in other cultures. However, I believe one critical fact is obscured by his persuasive arguments. And in view of recent *Commonweal* articles, (*vide* Abigail McCarthy and others), that have been supportive of women's rights, I wondered if Father Hillman subconsciously rejects this concept except in Westernized society. The ERA should not be seen, for example, as liberation of American women to exercise options, and only that. Its essential *raison d'être* is the recognition that women are human beings, wherever they live.

Does one of the tribal chief's 300 wives in the Cameroons feel her own unique dignity as a person? It may be sacrificed for socio-economic security, and for cultural traditions that deserve our respect. But her rights have been abrogated. Without passing any value judgments on the situation, it is still a sad reflection that we in the West forget too often the price that others pay while we are concerned with equal pay for equal work and a greater influence over our own life decisions.

Marriage involves persons. In a less than perfect world the rights and duties within this institution admit to an infinite variety of structures and relationships which "work" or do not. A norm does not exist. But without imposing Westernized living patterns on

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the majority of the world, can we not uphold a concept of marriage that provides (potentially, at least) a framework within which personhood is enhanced? I would not challenge the viability of polygamy, but something vital is lost.

PHYLLIS L. COLLINS

Shorewood, Wisc.

To the Editors: I find myself in almost complete sympathy with Eugene Hillman's notions in "Reconsidering Polygamy" [Nov. 21], but then I am proudly atheist and anticlerical. I think that, in asking, for instance, whether a "missionary [must] tell polygamist husbands that, if they wish to become Christians, they must first divorce the mothers of their own children," he shows a profound misunderstanding of the nature of religion.

If a religion cannot maintain an ideal—which, it should be needless to say, means a *single* standard—for such fundamental relationships as the conjugal state of men and women, what is its purpose? Herein lies the problem for any religion which seeks to arrive at (a) a standard and (b) a religious community which are both catholic. (There is, to me, a rather pleasant irony at work in this character—a pluralist with Catholic pretensions—which I hope is not lost.) Has it occurred to the hypothetical missionary, mentioned in the quote above, that he should stop evangelizing for a moment? The problem is not Catholicism's maintenance of a single standard; rather it is its insistance that everyone must become Christian and conform to that norm.

Allen Tate hit upon the problem for Christians when he wrote, in his essay "What is Literary Criticism?," that he would not discuss the social sciences because he had no proof that they did not exist. Perhaps the only way that the pluralist bias of the social sciences and the sense of a single truth which is essential to Catholicism (or any religion) are to be reconciled is for the church to recognize that it is not essential for that polygamist husband to become Christian and accept the monogamist dogma. Any attempt, by the church, to embrace intrinsically contradictory doctrines cannot but result in a debilitation of its moral authority. This prospect does not bother me, but doubtless it would not be well received by Father Hillman.

Parenthetically, shouldn't the editors of a journal with literary airs guard against such usage, replete with unnecessary suffixes, as "historicity" for "history;" "cultural embeddedness" for only God knows what; "is constitutive of" for "constitutes;" and "conceptualization and structuring" for "concept and structure," to draw my examples from just one paragraph?

RICK INMAN

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REVIEWERS

JOHN DRUSKA is a writer who currently teaches high school in Indianapolis.

FATHER RICHARD P. MCBRIEN is Chairman of the Institute for the Study of Religious Education and Service at Boston College and author of *Do We Need the Church?* (Harper & Row).

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Steinfels (Cont.)

That is not all, Herod realizes. The collapse of Rational Law will threaten the political regime as well. "Justice will be replaced by Pity." If the rumor is not stamped out, brought "by the trio who came to see me this morning with an ecstatic grin on their scholarly faces," every crook and cornerboy will imagine that God forgives their crimes. "The New Aristocracy will consist exclusively of hermits, bums, and permanent invalids."

"Naturally," thinks Herod, "this must not be allowed to happen. Civilization must be saved even if this means sending for the military, as I suppose it does. How dreary. . . . Why couldn't this wretched infant be born somewhere else? Why can't people be sensible?"

Even if the infant were God, he would have to be destroyed, but Auden's Herod is not Dostoyevsky's stern Inquisitor. Herod's musings finish by covering his recourse to violence with the balm of self-pity. It's not fair of God to put Herod in this pickle. Herod has worked hard—"Ask anyone you like. I read all official dispatches without skipping. . . . I've hardly ever taken bribes. . . . I brush my teeth. . . . I haven't had sex for a month. I object. I'm a liberal. I want everyone to be happy."

Compared to these modern versions of Herod, cut to the pattern of contemporary types, what was the "real" Herod like, that is, the one constructed according to the canons of truth used by historians rather than those used by polemicists, playwrights, and poets? Curious about that question, a few years ago I picked up *Herod the Great,* a handsomely illustrated volume published by American Heritage Press, a book suitable, perhaps, for small coffee tables. The author is the distinguished classical scholar Michael Grant, and his account, to my surprise, turned out to be similar to *Commonweal*'s, O'Brien's, and Auden's—but without the irony. I will write about it in my next column.

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